

Volume 52 Number 4 Winter 2011



Experimentation in Czechoslovak military film

Sexual kinaesthetics with Dorothy Arzner

Censorship of Chinese ghosts

Eternal return in *Inland Empire*

The Mourning Television debate

Screen



Screen

Volume 52 Number 4 Winter 2011

OXFORD

Subscription & order information: Screen (Print ISSN 0036-9543, Online ISSN 1460-2474) is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK. Annual subscription price is £163/US\$326/€245. A subscription to **Screen** comprises four issues. All prices include postage, and for subscribers outside the UK delivery is by Standard Air. Annual Subscription Rate (Volume 52, four issues, 2011): Institutional: (print and online) £163/US\$326/€245 (print only) £150/US\$299/€224 (online only) £136/US\$272/€204. Personal: (print only) £49/US\$98/€74. Please note: US\$ rate applies to US and Rest of World, except UK (£) and Europe (Euros). There may be other subscription rates available, for a complete listing please visit www.screen.oxfordjournals.org/subscriptions.

The current year and two previous years' issues are available from Oxford Journals. Previous volumes can be obtained from the Periodicals Service Company at <http://www.periodicals.com/oxford.html> or Periodicals Service Company, 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526, USA. E-mail: psc@periodicals.com. Tel: (518) 537-4700. Fax: (518) 537-5899. Issue date: **December 2011**.

Full prepayment, in the correct currency, is required for all orders. Orders are regarded as firm and payments are not refundable. Subscriptions are accepted and entered on a complete volume basis. Claims cannot be considered more than FOUR months after publication or date of order, whichever is later. All subscriptions in Canada are subject to GST. Subscriptions in the EU may be subject to European VAT. If registered, please supply details to avoid unnecessary charges. Personal rate subscriptions are only available if payment is made by personal cheque or credit card and delivery is to a private address.

Methods of Payment. (i) Cheque (to Oxford Journals, Cashiers Office, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK) in GBE Sterling (drawn on a UK bank), US\$ Dollars (drawn on a US bank), or EU€ Euros. (ii) Bank transfer to Barclays Bank Plc, Oxford Group Office, Oxford (bank sort code 20-65-18) (UK), overseas only Swift code BARC GB 22 (GBE Sterling to account no. 70299332, IBAN GB89BARC20651870299332; US\$ Dollars to account no. 66014600, IBAN GB27BARC20651866014600; EU€ Euros to account no. 78923655, IBAN GB16BARC20651878923655). (iii) Credit card (Mastercard, Visa, Switch or American Express). For further information, please contact: Journals Customer Service Department, Oxford Journals, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. Email: jnlscust.serv@oup.com. Tel (and answerphone outside normal working hours): +44 (0) 1865 353907. Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353485. In the Americas, please contact: Journals Customer Service Department, Oxford Journals, 2001 Evans Road, Cary, NC 27513, USA. Email: jnlorders@oup.com. Tel (and answerphone outside normal working hours): 800 852 7323 (toll-free in USA/Canada). Fax: 919 677 1714. In Japan, please contact: Journals Customer Services, Oxford Journals, 4-5-10-8F, Shiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-8386, Japan. Email: custserv.jp@oup.com. Tel: (03) 5444 5858. Fax: (03) 3454 2929.

Oxford Journals Environmental and Ethical Policies. Oxford Journals, a division of Oxford University Press, is committed to working with the global community to bring the highest quality research to the widest possible audience. Oxford Journals will protect the environment by implementing environmentally friendly policies and practices wherever possible. Please see <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/ethicalpolicies.html> for further information on Oxford Journals' environmental and ethical policies.

Permissions. For information on how to request permissions to reproduce articles/information from this journal, please visit www.oxfordjournals.org/jnls/permissions.

Advertising. Advertising, inserts and artwork enquiries should be addressed to Linda Hann, 60 Upper Broadmoor Road, Crowthorne RG45 7DE, UK. Email: lhann@talktalk.net. Tel/fax: +44 (0) 1344 779945.

Disclaimer. Statements of fact and Opinion in the articles in **Screen** are those of the respective authors and contributors and not of The John Logie Baird Centre or Oxford University Press. Neither Oxford University Press nor The John Logie Baird Centre make any representation, express or implied, in respect of the accuracy of the material in this journal and cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may be made. The reader should make his/her own evaluation as to the appropriateness or otherwise of any experimental technique described.

© 2011: The John Logie Baird Centre.

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishers, or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, or in the USA by the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. **Screen** incorporates **Screen Education**.

ISSN 0036-9543

Typeset by Techset Composition Ltd, Salisbury, UK.

Printed by Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow, UK.

editors

Tim Bergfelder
John Caughie
Annette Kuhn
Karen Lury
Jackie Stacey
Sarah Street

reports and debates editor

Jackie Stacey

reviews editor

Karen Lury

production editor

Caroline Beven

administrative assistant

Heather Middleton

editorial advisory board

William Boddy (USA)
Charlotte Brunsdon (UK)
Alison Butler (UK)
Erica Carter (UK)
Sean Cubitt (UK)
Stephanie Donald (Australia)
Dimitris Eleftheriotis (UK)
John Fletcher (UK)
Simon Frith (UK)
Christine Geraghty (UK)
Claudia Gorbman (USA)
Catherine Grant (UK)
Myra Macdonald (UK)
Laura U. Marks (Canada)
Lucia Nagib (UK)
Diane Negra (Ireland)
Alastair Phillips (UK)
Murray Smith (UK)
Will Straw (Canada)
Julian Stringer (UK)
Ravi Vasudevan (India)
Helen Wheatley (UK)
Ismail Xavier (Brazil)

editorial

Screen

Gilmorehill Centre
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ
screen@arts.gla.ac.uk

internet sites:

<http://www.screen.arts.gla.ac.uk>
<http://www.screen.oxfordjournals.org>

52:4 Winter 2011

issue editor

Jackie Stacey

cover illustration

34 ženy/34 Women (Vladimír Drha, 1969). By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha, <<http://www.vhu.cz/>>

ALICE LOVEJOY: A military avant-garde: experimentation in the Czechoslovak Army Film studio **427**

SUSAN POTTER: Mobilizing lesbian desire: the sexual kinaesthetics of Dorothy Arzner's *The Wild Party* **442**

LAIKWAN PANG: The state against ghosts: a genealogy of China's film censorship policy **461**

JENNIFER PRANOLO: Laura Dern's eternal return **477**

THE MOURNING TELEVISION DEBATE

JEREMY G. BUTLER: Eluding elegy: placing *Screen* in one possible history of television studies **493**

JASON JACOBS: The medium in crisis: Caughie, Brunsdon and the problem of US television **503**

HELEN PIPER: Lost in participation **512**

REPORT

LAUREN JADE THOMPSON: 'Histories of the digital future: archives of the audio-visual' workshop, University of Warwick **522**

REVIEWS

ANDY BIRTWISTLE: James Tobias, *Sync: Stylistics of Hieroglyphic Time* **528**

ALISON BUTLER: Tamara Trodd (ed.), *Screen/Space: the Projected Image in Contemporary Art* **531**

EYLEM ATAĞAV: Savas Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: a New Critical History* **535**

SUSAN BERRIDGE: Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen* **537**

LEE CARRUTHERS: Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's Quest and its Charge* **540**

MARIA A. VELEZ-SERNA: Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* **544**

PIERS BRITTON: Ian Christie, *The Art of Film: John Box and Production Design* **546**

SUE TURNBULL: Charlotte Brunsdon, *Law and Order*; Mark Duguid, *Cracker*; Deborah Jermy, *Prime Suspect* (British Film Institute TV Classics Series) **549**

KATHLEEN SCOTT: Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity: an Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* **553**

CONTRIBUTORS 557

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS 560

A military avant garde: experimentation in the Czechoslovak Army Film studio

ALICE LOVEJOY

On 21 January 1969 a group of Czechoslovak Army directors and cameramen set off, cameras in hand, for the centre of Prague. There they joined a crowd of over 500,000 others for the funeral procession of university student Jan Palach, who a week earlier had publicly immolated himself in protest at the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion, and subsequent occupation, of Czechoslovakia. If the invasion marked the beginning of the end of the 'Prague Spring', the reforms that had defined Czechoslovak politics and society since the early 1960s, the crowds at Palach's funeral procession were participating in one of the last spontaneous expressions of resistance to occur before the post-invasion period of 'normalization' began in earnest.¹ The black-and-white footage captured by the Army filmmakers sketches the luminous image of a city that is defined by these crowds alone: beyond their sombre faces and wringing hands Prague's Baroque outlines are barely visible. Soon afterwards, director Ivan Balad'a composed the material into *Les/Forest* (1969) an elegiac city film and a portrait of a metropolis in the throes of mourning.

Forest, however, is also an elegy of a different sort. It represents one of the last in a series of avant-garde documentaries produced in the late 1960s by the Czechoslovak Army Film studio (*Československý armádní film*, hereafter, Army Film), films whose institutional origins are belied by their aesthetic experimentation and political outspokenness – for the Army's productions of this period were

1 Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 188–91.

- 2 The Czechoslovak New Wave describes a series of innovative feature-length fiction films produced by Czechoslovakia's State Film studio roughly between 1962 and 1969.
- 3 Václav Šmídkal, *Armáda a stříbrné plátno: Československý armádní film 1951–1999* [The army and the silver screen: Czechoslovak Army Film, 1951–1999] (Prague: Naše vojsko, 2009), p. 21.
- 4 Ivan Klimeš, 'Armáda a film v tisku a kulturních časopisech první republiky' [The army and film in newspapers and magazines of the First Republic], in *Obraz vojenského prostředí v kinematografii meziválečného Československa* [The image of the military in interwar Czechoslovak cinema] (Prague: Historický ústav československé armády a Český filmový ústav, 1992), p. 14.
- 5 In this period, the studio was known, first, as the Military Technical Institute (*Vojenský technický ústav*), and then as the Military Technical and Aviation Institute (*Vojenský technický a letecký ústav*).
- 6 *Kulturfilme* formed the basis for Jeníček's own writings on nonfiction film practice, that is, his book *Krátký film/The Short Film*. Jana Hadková writes that Jeníček 'promoted the thinking [about film's] propagandistic dimensions that originated in the USA and UK' in Czechoslovakia right at the start of the 1930s'. Jana Hadková, 'Režisér Jiří Jeníček' [Director Jiří Jeníček], in *Obraz vojenského prostředí v kinematografii meziválečného Československa* [The image of the military in interwar Czechoslovak cinema], pp. 52–53.
- 7 The well-known Czech director Jiří Weiss was among the filmmakers who spent the war working in the UK.
- 8 Cinema was the first industry to be nationalized in Czechoslovakia, and was taken under state control more than two months before major industries, banks, and so on. Alexej Kusák, *Kultura a politika v Československu, 1945–1956* [Culture and politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1956] (Prague: Torst, 1998), p. 188.

frequently more radical, in form and politics, than those of the contemporaneous Czechoslovak New Wave.² This paradoxical situation is the focus of my essay, which traces the history of these films, examining their links to the studio that produced them, to the Czechoslovak state, and to the social and political dynamics of the 'exceptional' year of 1951 when the Prague Spring reached its peak. Arguing that institutional and social factors were central not only to the emergence but also to the form of this 'military avant garde', I argue that this phenomenon asks us to reconsider the question of the relationship between cinema and the state within, and beyond, postwar East Central Europe, and to explore the 'productivity' of marginal or unexpected spaces of cultural production.

Military film had existed in Czechoslovakia since 1919, when the Ministry of Defence's Photo- and Cinematographic Division (*Foto a kinematografické oddělení MNO*) was founded to produce propaganda and training films.³ If the formation of such a studio was in one sense a reflection of the country's new, post-World War I sovereignty (Czechoslovakia's territories had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of the war, and according to Ivan Klimeš the military studio's films evinced a 'desire to represent Czechoslovakia in the world'),⁴ the uniqueness of the endeavour became clear in the 1930s, when, under the leadership of photographer, filmmaker and theorist Jiří Jeníček, the studio developed links to experimental and nonfiction film traditions at home and abroad.⁵ Jeníček hired as cameramen figures such as Jiří Lehovec, director of the groundbreaking Czech avant-garde film *Divotvorné oko/The Magic Eye* (1939), and followed trends in contemporary world nonfiction film, adapting some of them (particularly the German *Kulturfilme* and Griersonian propaganda) into the studio's own filmmaking practices.⁶ These links grew more sustained during World War II, when filmmakers from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia accompanied the country's government-in-exile to the UK, making films for its Army and the Ministry of Information, and collaborating with the British Crown Film Unit.⁷

While this legacy of engagement with avant-garde and documentary cultures would be crucial to the Army Film productions in the 1960s, the conditions for military film production in Czechoslovakia were further established by the end of World War II. The studio (then the Military Film and Photographic Institute [*Vojenský filmový a fotografický ústav*]) began the decade in a unique situation, as president Edvard Beneš's 1945 nationalization decree exempted it from the control of film production, distribution and exhibition that the decree granted the state.⁸ This at first constrained the studio (which in 1950 was renamed Czechoslovak Army Film): for the first five years after the war, lacking funding and organization, Army filmmakers produced films only sporadically.⁹ Yet it also allowed for a considerable degree of autonomy, as after the Communist Party came to power in 1948 Army Film was not subject to oversight from its Central Committee (as Czechoslovakia's primary film

- 9 Dekret presidenta republiky o opatřeních v oblasti filmu [The president's decree regarding measures in the field of film], no. 50/1945 Sb., <<http://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1945-50>>; VÚA-VHA [Central Military Archive – Military Historical Archive] Prague, fond MNO 1955, i.č. 204, sign. 24/19/1–6.
- 10 Jaromír Kallista, interview with the author, Prague, 28 January 2008.
- 11 Muriel Blaive writes that Čepička cultivated 'a cult of his own personality'. Muriel Blaive, *Une déstalinisation manquée: Tchécoslovaquie 1956* (Paris: Editions complexe, 2005), p. 62.
- 12 Jiří Pernes, Jaroslav Pospíšil, and Antonín Lukáš, *Alexej Čepička: Šedá eminence rudého režimu* [Alexej Čepička: eminence gris of the red regime] (Prague: Nakladatelství Brána, 2008), pp. 231–32.
- 13 VÚA-VHA Prague, fond MNO 1955, i.č. 204, sign. 24/19/1–6.
- 14 Pavel Jiras and Zdeněk Mareš (eds), *František Vlášil: Zápasy* [František Vlášil: struggles] (Prague: Správa Pražského hradu and Barrandov Studio, 2008), p. 5.
- 15 In 1951, Army Film produced five documentary, reportage and advertising films, one short fiction film and twelve newsreels; in 1952, nine documentary films and seven training films; and in 1953 fourteen documentary films, and one short film, and six training films. VÚA-VHA Prague, fond MNO 1954, k. č. 34–35, sign. 24 19/1.
- 16 'Propaganda' was a broad term in the studio, encompassing documentary, fiction and newsreels.
- 17 VÚA-VHA Prague, fond MNO 1954, k. č. 34–35, sign. 24 19/1.

studio, Czechoslovak State Film [*Československý státní film*], largely was).¹⁰

Army Film's financial fortunes changed with the appointment in 1950 of Alexej Čepička as Minister of Defence. Čepička, son-in-law of President Klement Gottwald, and the politician with the closest connections to the Soviet Union and, personally, to Stalin, was notoriously megalomaniacal and saw film as a means not only of training a more effective army but of raising its, and his own, status in 'civilian' life.¹¹ From 1950 until 1955 Čepička devoted extensive financial and material resources to Army Film, as he did to a wide range of military cultural institutions such as theatres, cinemas, libraries and houses of culture.¹² During this period Army Film acquired laboratory space and equipment, and instituted a programme under which filmmakers (directors, cameramen, production managers, and so on) – including recent graduates of FAMU, Czechoslovakia's national film academy – would serve their required period of military service in the studio. Many of these would later become key figures in the New Wave: among the well-known directors to serve in Army Film in the 1950s and 1960s were Zbyněk Brynych, Ladislav Helge, Vojtěch Jasný, Pavel Juráček, Karel Kachyňa, Jiří Menzel, Jan Němec, Karel Vachek and František Vlášil.¹³ For some, service in the Army substituted for formal education in film. Vlášil is the best known of these; as he notes in an interview: 'I was never an assistant director to anyone, nor did I go to film school, and thus Army Film, for me, was a "journeyman's" school'.¹⁴

As its technical, financial and professional resources improved, the studio's productions expanded in number, more than doubling over the course of two years.¹⁵ At the same time, Army propaganda¹⁶ films themselves 'grew' and were increasingly cut to feature length. The 1953 feature documentary *Lidé jednoho srdce/People of One Heart* (Vojtěch Jasný and Karel Kachyňa), for instance, chronicled the visit of the Czechoslovak Army's song-and-dance troupe to China, while the socialist realist epic *Tanková brigáda/The Tank Brigade* (Ivo Toman, 1955) offered a Soviet-centric reading of the end of World War II in Czechoslovakia (Soviet soldiers and their tanks are seen as heroes, while generals who spent the war in exile in Britain are portrayed as effete and bourgeois, endlessly pining for Piccadilly). In keeping with Čepička's desire to appeal to 'civilian' audiences, these films were distributed beyond the country's circuit of barracks screening rooms and military cinemas, and were reviewed in popular film journals. (They were, however, apparently not distributed widely enough for the general's taste: a 1954 Army memorandum complains that while a production of the Czechoslovak State Film Studio on the Olympics was screened 5517 times to 1,012,739 viewers, *People of One Heart* was screened only a quarter as many times, 1437, to 160,611 viewers.¹⁷)

Under Čepička's leadership, then, Army Film continued to operate, as it had in the interwar period, at the juncture of the military and civilian spheres. But while before 1945 the links between these two spheres had

been fluid, after the war – and particularly in the early 1950s, the height of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia – Army Film became something of a paradox. At this moment the Army was, for most Czechoslovaks, antithetical to civilian society: it was infamous for its internal purges, its role in the highly public show trials of 1951, and its political and human rights abuses (such as in the notorious ‘black brigades’ detailed in Milan Kundera’s 1967 novel *The Joke*) – a reputation that Čepička played no small role in fostering. At the same time, however, its institutional autonomy and considerable wealth allowed the Army to pose an alternative to ‘civilian’ cinema – to shoot long films in colour, to employ the best and brightest of the country’s film talents, and so on.

Čepička was dismissed from power in 1956, the sole Czechoslovak political casualty of Soviet premier Nikolai Khrushchev’s ‘secret speech’ (which began the process of de-Stalinization across Eastern Europe).¹⁸ Yet Army Film’s paradoxical situation persisted through the late 1950s and early 1960s and into the Prague Spring, as Czechoslovakia slowly and laboriously de-Stalinized.¹⁹ Reform did not escape the Army (which went so far, in the Gottwald Memorandum – a text by Czechoslovakia’s leading military academy – as to propose rapprochement with the country’s arch enemy West Germany²⁰), and was in large part spearheaded by its department of propaganda and political education, the Main Political Administration (*Hlavní politická správa*). Army Film fell under the leadership of this department, and with its support, as well as that of a liberal cadre of studio dramaturges, military filmmakers were freer than before to choose topics and styles for their work.²¹ In place of feature-length colour films, ‘propaganda’ productions in this period tended to be black and white, short and nonfiction. Moreover, precisely because of this freedom – and as civilian mistrust of, and distaste for, the military grew increasingly public – such films became a strong voice of antimilitarism. Pavel Juráček’s 1967 Army feature *Konec srpna v hotelu Ozon/The End of August at the Hotel Ozone*, for instance, commonly considered a New Wave film, envisions the apocalyptic aftermath of a nuclear world war, while Karel Vachek’s short section in *Armádní filmový měsíčník 3/65/Army Newsreel 3/65* (1965), ‘The Liberation of Ostrava’, ostensibly celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet liberation of Czechoslovakia but in fact, using the director’s trademark Brechtian strategies, underscores the traumatic, often absurd, nature of warfare.

Thus by the late 1960s, due to the confluence of institutional dimensions set in place at the height of the Stalinist period and the Army’s increasingly liberal political stance, Army Film had become a uniquely fertile ground for film production in Czechoslovakia. It was also home to a dynamic film culture: journalist Luděk Čermák estimated that by 1968 the number of film clubs in Army barracks exceeded that of film clubs in the civilian sphere, and these clubs appear to have been quite progressive, with programmes featuring Ingmar Bergman’s *Smultronstället/Wild Strawberries* (1957), Alain Resnais’s *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and Michelangelo Antonioni’s *La notte* (1961).²² Yet perhaps because its

18 H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 33.

19 While Czechoslovakia’s de-Stalinization began, as elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, with the ‘secret speech’, the country did not undergo the major upheavals that the Soviet Union, Hungary or Poland did in this year. Instead, it took nearly a decade after Stalin’s death (c. 1962 to 1963) for Czechoslovakia officially to critique the Stalinist ‘cult of personality’ and exonerate the victims of the country’s show trials of the early 1950s, setting in motion the reforms of the Prague Spring.

20 Gottwald Memorandum, in Josef Hodič, *Working Study No. 5: Military Political Views Prevalent in the Czechoslovak Army 1948–1968* (Research Project ‘The Experience of the Prague Spring 1968’, directed by Dr Zdeněk Mlynář and a Scientific Council, 1979), p. 25.

21 Many directors cite the appointment of Roman Hlaváč as head dramaturge of the studio and Pavel Háša as its head director, both of which occurred in the early 1960s, as central to the development of Army film culture. Juraj Šajmovič, Ivan Balad’a, Rudolf Krejčík, Alois Fišárek, Jaromír Kallista, Jan Schmidt, Karel Vachek and Rudolf Adler, in interviews with the author.

22 Luděk Čermák, ‘Filmové kluby v armádě’ [Film clubs in the Army], *Záběr* [Shot], no. 21 (1968), p. 6.

23 Juraj Šajmovič, *Duch času: Mezi fotografií a filmem* [The spirit of the age: between photography and film] (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 2003), p. 8.

productions of this decade tended to be shorter, and because of the broader antimilitarism of the 1960s, the studio also found itself unable to distribute its films as widely as it had in the 1950s. The notion of the paradox, then – with the inherent duality of its structure – continued, as it had in the 1950s, to define Army Film as an institution, as well as its position within Czechoslovak society. At the same time, this concept became central to the form taken by the films in the studio's 'military avant garde'.

This intertwined formal and institutional duality became legible for the first time in the 1968 film *Metrum* (Ivan Balad'a, 1967), which, intended as a documentary about mass transportation in Moscow, was commissioned by the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Society (*Svaz československo-sovětského přátelství*) and assigned to a pair of longtime Army filmmakers, director Balad'a and cameraman Juraj Šajmovič. The filmmakers departed for Moscow; yet, as Šajmovič recounts in a 2003 interview, when they arrived they were disappointed by what they encountered: 'we looked over the depots: [and] were shocked that the transportation system was functioning at all ... it was a boring environment with no inspiration. The people ... spoke to the camera in agitational catch-phrases.' However, he continues:

one day ... we went down into the Metro. We stiffened. We became silent, we were shocked. What an experience! It was really something. It had power. Rhythm. It really worked! ... Suddenly and simultaneously we decided that this was it. We decided that we simply must shoot the film here. Is it transportation? Yes!²³

The filmmakers thus abandoned the expository documentary they had been assigned and made a film that is largely defined by this encounter with the Metro, its crowds flowing up and down its great escalators and through its hallways, the chiaroscuro faces and bodies of its passengers, and its cathedral-like architecture (figure 1). Šajmovič's handheld camerawork is a central partner in constructing the film's atmosphere, and itself relies on location for its effects: escalators become the basis for ersatz tracking shots, and, in the film's final shot, the camera travels on a train from the darkness of the subway to the light outside, with the combination of location lighting and a fixed aperture creating an in-camera fade to white.

Such location-based techniques produce an effect that is, on one level, precisely what the Friendship Society was looking for: a rather pure reportage about transportation in Moscow insofar as the location of the Metro was integral to the look of the film. On another level, however, this reportage engages dimensions that extend beyond the space itself: Šajmovič's use of light, the linearity and direction of the Metro's up-and-down-moving escalators, and the film's final shot all suggest a messianic dimension to the space that is emphasized on a sonic level by the liturgical music – a *panychida*, or Orthodox requiem – that the film superimposes on the everyday murmuring, clicking and rumbling of the subway. (As

Fig. 1. *Metrum* (Ivan Balad'a, 1967).

By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha [The Military History Institute, Prague], www.vhu.cz.



24 Mikhail Ryklin, "The best in the world": the discourse of the Moscow Metro in the 1930s', and Boris Groys, 'The art of totality', trans. Mary A. Akatiff, in Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (eds), *The Landscape of Stalinism* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003), pp. 264, 118. The film's original title, in fact, was *Panychida 36*, a reference both to the Orthodox requiem and to the year of Balad'a's birth.

25 Šajmovic, *Duch času*, p. 9.

26 *Filmový přehled* [Film bulletin], no. 13 (1969), p. 2.

27 Švejk, in Hašek's 1923 novel, is a 'half-witted' denizen of Prague, a man who makes his living selling mongrels as pedigrees and passes his days swilling beer at a local pub. When called up for World War I, Švejk time and again manages to land himself and his fellow soldiers in trouble (and avoid being sent to the front) usually by following too literally the orders given to him. Thus, while ostensibly proving his obedience to the Austro-Hungarian regime, Švejk, wittingly or not, becomes the ultimate Czech patriot.

Mikhail Ryklin and Boris Groys note, this spiritual dimension, the notion that it represented a utopia on earth, had been crucial to the Metro since its design and construction in the 1930s.²⁴)

The formal duality that *Metrum* embodies is also reflected in its reception. 'After the approval screening,' Šajmovič recalls, 'the military bigwigs in Prague tore out their hair and immediately sent another team to shoot the correct film about Moscow transportation.'²⁵ Yet this was not the end of *Metrum*. Army Film's dramaturges sent the film to the 1969 Short Film Festival in Karlovy Vary (from 1960 to 1969 Czechoslovakia's leading experimental and documentary film festival, and unrelated to the yearly film festival in Karlovy Vary), where it shared first prize for documentary film. The festival jury wrote of *Metrum* as a 'breakthrough authorial achievement that, through the image of a major city's underground railway, gives rise to a suggestive representation of the fate of modern man, who is seen as alienated and powerless'.²⁶

Thus, in a sense, *Metrum* became two separate projects. One, the original assignment – a new film entitled *Moscow*, presumably delivered to the Czechoslovak–Soviet Friendship Society without a word about its secret twin – served the original purpose of solidifying cultural relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The second film, still called *Metrum*, was briefly canonized in the country's experimental and documentary film community. Thus from the duality embodied by its form (a subjective, abstracted form of reportage), to the doubling of films ultimately produced (one for military purposes, one for civilian; one 'official', one 'unofficial'), we may see how *Metrum* was, both formally and institutionally, a product of the studio that made it, and of its capacity – in the tradition of the Czech lands' best-known military figure, novelist Jaroslav Hašek's Good Soldier Švejk – to 'say one thing and do another'.²⁷

We may, however, also read *Metrum* as the product of Army Film as an institution in a second sense, by examining the film's economic

dimensions and the language used by studio officials to describe them. *Metrum* is mentioned for the first time in Army Film's 'Report on the Fulfillment of the Plan' for the first quarter of 1968, where it is described by a unique phrase, 'outside the plan' (*mimo plán*). While this term, on a basic level, designates the fact that *Metrum* had not been written in advance into Army Film's annual budget, production schedule or dramaturgical outline, on a broader level it would become an institutional descriptor for the 'military avant garde', encapsulating the films' mode of production and their aesthetic, and creating rhetorical 'space' for them within the studio.

Quarterly reports such as this were central to Army Film's operation, and accounted for the thematic, temporal and economic 'plans' that governed the studio's work in a given year. These were a small reflection of the numerous multiple-year 'plans' that had driven and defined Czechoslovakia's nationalized economy since 1947, and that were, in the studio as elsewhere, accompanied by discourse that revolved around the syntactical similarity between the catchphrases 'fulfilling the plan' and 'building socialism'. Both phrases refer to the construction of something whose outcome is already known: communism is the end-point of the Marxist vision of history, while, in the state-socialist economies of East Central Europe, the issuing of economic plans also rhetorically mandated that they be completed. Both, moreover, share an inherently progressive temporality: 'building socialism' might be read as embodying, in Svetlana Boym's terms, 'the teleological, forward-looking time of Marxist-Leninist progress toward the bright future', while Martin Sabrow observes, in postwar East Germany, an 'amalgamation of progress and plan'.²⁸

In Army Film, too, the term 'outside the plan' had both an economic and a temporal basis. The latter is encapsulated in the remaining 'Reports on the Fulfillment of the Plan' for 1968, in which appear numerous complaints by the studio's leadership about the incompatibility of central economic planning with film production. For instance, in a report filed in July, studio chief Bedřich Benda writes that 'in film production, the fact has always been that a plan cannot do justice to its realization, as is the case in common ... manufacturing, because at the time it is assembled ... very little ... is perfectly known'.²⁹ In the following report, issued in October, Benda observes a fundamental 'conflict between reality and the plan'.³⁰ These complaints suggest that cinema (and, in particular, nonfiction film) has a unique temporality, one incommensurable with industrial or agricultural production, and in which unplanned encounters with 'reality' interfere with deadlines. This incommensurability was, in fact, how *Metrum* came into existence: the filmmakers could not have planned for the encounter they had with the Moscow Metro, and thus the film was produced 'outside the plan', or according to what we might term 'documentary time'.

Army Film's increasingly vocal complaints about planning were, in part, an index of the degree to which the studio was embroiled in the Prague Spring, for a crucial element of the reforms was the Czechoslovak

28 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001), p. 231; Martin Sabrow, 'Time and legitimacy: comparative reflections on the sense of time in the two German dictatorships', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2005), p. 360.

29 SA AČR [Administrative Archive of the Army of the Czech Republic] Olomouc, fond 397, k. č. 2, sv. 59/1-N, čj. 368, Zpráva o plnění plánu u HOZS za II. čtvrtletí 1968, 26. července 1968.

30 SA AČR Olomouc, fond 397, k. č. 2, sv. 59/1-N, čj. 546, Zpráva o plnění plánu u HOZS za III. čtvrtletí 1968, 29. října 1968.

- 31 Tony Judt, *Postwar* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2005), p. 437; Oldřich Kyn, 'Market and price mechanism in socialist countries: the rise and fall of economic reform in Czechoslovakia', in 'Papers and proceedings of the eighty-second annual meeting of the American Economic Association', special edition, *The American Economic Review*, vol. 60, no. 2 (1970), p. 302.
- 32 In keeping with this, chronicles of 1968 are frequently structured as lists of dates (for example, Zdeněk Hejzlar and Vladimír Kusin, *Czechoslovakia 1968–1969: Chronology, Bibliography, Annotation* (New York, NY: Garland, 1975)). *The Czech Black Book* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1969), which narrates, minute by minute, the events taking place around Czechoslovakia during the invasion, highlights the ways in which time was condensed – and put into disorder – even more dramatically during the invasion.
- 33 Ivan Balad'a, interview with the author, Prague, 15 September 2008.
- 34 Ibid.

state's gradual abandonment of centralized planning. While economist Ota Šik had suggested this at the Twelfth Czechoslovak Party Congress in December 1962, the process began in earnest in 1967. In the following two years, economic 'guidelines', general and non-binding, were issued in place of plans.³¹ And, indeed, during these years a larger number of Army films were produced 'outside the plan'. Moreover, both the studio's complaints and the films may also be read as a reflection of the temporality of 1968, and particularly the period surrounding the invasion, during which time was disrupted on a more general level and the political situation in Czechoslovakia changed dramatically from day to day.³²

Balad'a's *Forest*, discussed above, was a key film of this period and, like some others, it documents an 'unplanned' encounter with 'reality' – in this case the funeral procession of Jan Palach. During Palach's funeral procession, Balad'a notes, 'everyone who had a camera' was in the streets filming, yet *Forest* differs from the numerous reportages and newsreels that documented the event and is structured, in part, by its soundtrack, a choral adaptation of a prose poem by Maxim Gorky.³³ 'I looked for a metaphor', Balad'a says. 'I remembered Gorky's prose-poem, "Danko's Burning Heart"'. A cantata had been composed on the text, and we knew in advance we wanted to use it in this way. So the reportage details of the funeral procession are not there.'³⁴

Indeed, almost nothing in *Forest* is expository, and like *Metrum* the film is made up primarily of crowd shots. This imparts an overwhelming impression of the mass: the camera rarely allows anything other than human faces and bodies to enter the frame, and we are never given any visual clues to the reason behind the gathering beyond a brief sequence in which we glimpse, through the crowds, a student honour guard. Thus, as in *Metrum*, the viewer has the sense of being part of the crowd, glimpsing what one can, from an embodied point of view (figure 2).



Fig. 2. *Les/Forest* (Ivan Balad'a, 1969). By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha [The Military History Institute, Prague], www.vhu.cz.

This lack of explanatory detail is matched by spatial indeterminacy. *Forest* begins, as *Metrum* does, with a series of tracking shots. Some of these sketch barely visible figures standing in line in the pre-dawn darkness; others are tilted upwards, showing streetlights and the outlines of rooftops against the sky. Yet unlike *Metrum*'s tracking shots these do not orient the viewer in a particular space; in fact they do quite the opposite. Just as in the crowd shots, where the viewer has no sense of where he or she stands, in *Forest*'s opening moments, which should logically serve as establishing shots for the entire film, location is implied to be indeterminate. This sense of rootlessness is heightened by the film's frequent use of frontal shots of faces and bodies and extreme high-angle shots, which disregard spatial and historical context.

For Balad'a, this decontextualization is part of the film's metaphoric charge, and works in dialogue with its soundtrack. Gorky's poem tells the story of a young man, Danko, who leads an enslaved people out of a dark, dangerous forest by holding his own burning heart aloft as a beacon. When they emerge from the forest Danko dies, a martyr, unthanked. The use of this metaphor in *Forest* is complex. On one level there is a simple equivalence between the figures of Danko and Palach, but within this is a broader critique of Czechoslovak society after the 1968 invasion. Kieran Williams argues that Palach's actions reflected the ultimate refusal by most of Czechoslovak society to resist the invasion:

in his effort to stir the nation he opted for self-destruction rather than terrorism; he chose the morally superior route of defiance, just as the entire country had in August [1968] when it renounced violent resistance to the invasion. Though stunning in its dignity, this approach brought no political rewards. What he had not counted on was the symbolic power of the martyr in Czech constructs of identity; he became another member in a pantheon that [interwar president Tomáš] Masaryk had denounced as an unhealthy distraction from genuine action.³⁵

Balad'a, in his discussion of *Forest*, seems to critique post-invasion Czechoslovakia in a similar way. He notes that the static dimensions of his film were intended partially to emphasize a broader lack of action, an idea that is underscored by the film's ending, in which the assembled masses disperse: 'the sadness was real and big', says Balad'a,

but afterwards, when the funeral procession ended, people went home quickly, as if from a football match. ... So I put that at the end, because I sensed what would come, that people would really forget. ... Where *Metrum* ends with the light, here, they split apart, they disperse.³⁶

Although it uses the same style as *Metrum*, then – the style of the 'military avant garde' – *Forest* diverges from its predecessor not only in its engagement with space (location), but also in its engagement with time. At the level of mise-en-scene, *Forest* operates entirely in the static present of the actions we see on screen; there is no kinetic logic to 'move' the

35 Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 190.

36 Ibid. Beyond this simple equation between Danko and Palach is the more complex relationship to the Soviet Union signaled by the fact that it is a work by Maxim Gorky – one of the most 'official' Soviet writers – that the film adapts. Balad'a, however, has a deep affection for Russian culture; his feature film for Czechoslovak State Film *Archa bláznů/Ark of Fools* (1970) is an adaptation of Chekhov's *Pavilion 6*.

narrative forward. At the same time, in its suggestion of a lack of resistance, the film stretches forward in time to the post-invasion period of ‘normalization’ in Czechoslovakia, which was marked by a large-scale retreat from political activity in the public sphere. Unlike *Metrum*, however, whose messianic time might be read as a guarantee of a redemptive future, no such redemption is legible in *Forest*, whose crowds disperse but whose cameras remain at the site, and in the present, of the funeral procession.

If *Forest* addresses the effects of the 1968 invasion on Czechoslovakia’s civilian sphere, a series of Army Films from 1969 shed light on its effects on the rank-and-file soldier. The invasion and occupation fully disempowered the Czechoslovak Army on its own soil, with soldiers ordered to the barracks as Warsaw Pact troops entered the country and the Army remaining neutralized during the occupation. Most significant among these films was an ‘unplanned’ tetralogy, by director Vladimír Drha and cameraman Karel Hložek, which reacts to the September 1968 transfer of Czechoslovak military units from bases in Central Bohemia, near Prague, to eastern Slovakia.³⁷ The transfers ostensibly took place to make room for occupying soldiers, but it was generally understood that they were intended to prevent resistance to the occupation on the part of the reformist Army. The ‘transfer tetralogy’ begins with *Lekce/Lesson* (1969), a sometimes sarcastic, sometimes mournful documentary of soldiers packing up a Central Bohemian base and ‘welcoming’ its new residents, and continues with *34 ženy/34 Women* (1969) and *Barvotisk/Colour Wheel* (1969; in Slovak, *Farbotlač*): the first following thirty-four officers’ wives on a weekend visit from Prague to their potential new home in Humenné, Slovakia; the second documenting the first ‘military marriage’, in February 1969, between a transferred soldier and a local textile worker.

37 Another Army film on the same topic was Milan Růžička’s 1968 *Rozkaz/Order*.



Fig. 3. *Lekce/Lesson* (Vladimír Drha, 1969). By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha [The Military History Institute, Prague], www.vhu.cz.

38 Flowers are an important trope in the film: in commanders' hands, adorning tanks, and crushed on the ground.

Lesson is sharply ironic from the start, as two title cards appear over the jaunty opening notes of a military march. The first reads 'The Minister of Defence issued an order this year for the transfer of soldiers from several bases around Prague to eastern Slovakia. The goal was to free up military buildings.' The second card reads, simply and sarcastically, 'The order was carried out'. To the strains of the military march and from the point of view of a moving tank, *Lesson* then shows residents of the towns waving to soldiers as they drive through the streets, and soldiers going about the work of moving their base's furnishings across the country.³⁸ The march stops abruptly and symbolically as the tank, its barrel draped with the Czechoslovak flag, halts in front of a concrete wall. There is nowhere further for it to go.

In place of the march, a mournful, at times eerie, soundtrack forms the background to the following section. We see naked soldiers showering and shaving, and Hložek wanders with his handheld camera throughout the soon-to-be-abandoned barracks, capturing their half-disassembled spaces in very long takes. He focuses on evocative 'found' images: a book entitled *The World and its Problems* abandoned on a bed; a soldier asleep on a pile of mattresses; soldiers (presumably the base's new Soviet residents) hanging a collage of pornographic photographs on a wall. This section is again bracketed by sound. As the drumbeats of another march begin, we see a repetition of a trope that has run throughout the film: huge socialist realist tableaux being carried out of the barracks and into storage. In the film's final shot we watch from outside the storage room's broken window as a painting of female peasants is leaned against the window, the women seemingly imprisoned behind its bars (figure 3). After the last strains of the march fade away, the painting falls from the window, leaving its fractured panes black and empty. This ending is described in the film's release details: 'Four soldiers carry the "cult" images into a little courtyard. ... Through a barred little window, the image we have seen



Fig. 4. 34 ženy/34 Women (Vladimír Drha, 1969). By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha [The Military History Institute, Prague], www.vhu.cz.

39 *Filmový přehled*, no. 4 (1969), p. 16. Here 'cult' refers to Stalinism, and to socialist realism, which was associated with the Stalinist period.

with the *kolkhozi* falls and disappears. Through the bars, there remains only darkness.³⁹ If, in its mournful tone, *Lesson*'s depiction of the move displays opposition to the occupation, this sequence is the film's most explicitly political, and encapsulates the resonance of 1968 for most Czechoslovaks: a fatal disillusionment with the Communist Party, for which the paintings offer a simple metaphor. However, with the blank window from which socialist realism has now, it seems, permanently departed, Drha and Hložek suggest that space remains for new modes of representation, among which, perhaps, is the mode that *Lesson* and other 'unplanned' films represent.

Drha and Hložek's subsequent films, *34 Women* and *Colour Wheel*, use a similar style to depict the aftermath of the transfer. *34 Women* follows officers' wives on a weekend trip to Eastern Slovakia, during which military commanders try to convince them to join their transferred husbands there. Yet between the overnight train trip and endless meetings in which officers and their wives seem mostly to drink, the women barely have a moment alone with their husbands (figure 4). In its suggestion of the invasion's collateral social damage (emphasized on a visual level by disorienting framing and an almost total lack of explanatory information), *34 Women* is linked thematically to *Colour Wheel*, in which Drha captures a wedding from first preparations to church ceremony, ending with a raucous party in a pub. The first film's critique of the transfer is rooted in the extreme distance between Central Bohemia and Eastern Slovakia, and the official optimism that surrounded what was evidently a very bleak future. *Colour Wheel*'s critique, however, is metaphorical and more dramatic: a live rooster on a chopping block opens the film (which takes its name from its garish palette), and the dead animal, its fresh blood red on the white snow, forms its final image (figure 5).

The tetralogy ends with the film *Ves/Village* (Vladimír Drha, 1969), a portrait of Milovice, one of the central Bohemian Army towns from which



Fig. 5. *Barvotisk/Colour Wheel* (Vladimír Drha, 1969). By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha [The Military History Institute, Prague], www.vhu.cz.

Czechoslovak soldiers were transferred, and which the film depicts during its occupation. *Village*, however, only alludes to this – as in *Forest* and *34 Women*, no information is given to the viewer about where and when it is set.⁴⁰ This lack of context seems to hinge on *Village*'s point of view, which is implied to be that of a child seen in the film's opening and closing sequences. As in *Lesson*, *Village*'s soundtrack is essential to establishing its atmosphere. The film begins with a closeup of the back of the child's head, accompanied by a harpsichord lullaby. As the child turns to face the camera, the soundtrack shifts to a minimalist mixture of tones that recalls the soundtrack from *Lesson*. There follows a series of still shots of wintry village life, filmed straight on: a family in a courtyard; a man riding a hand-powered recumbent tricycle; children sledding; still shots of houses, stores, statues, walls, boarded-up windows, and graves, all of them seemingly abandoned. We see agricultural tools – a scarecrow, the seat of a tractor – and images from the natural world – a dog playing with a kitten, a duck and a rabbit wandering in a snowy marsh, horses feeding, chickens roosting. Intermittent shots show Soviet soldiers walking through the frame, and in one shot a child appears to mimic them, patrolling in front of a building with a stick strapped military-style to his back. The film concludes with the lullaby with which it began, as the child turns its back to the camera.

The idea that this is a child's perspective explains *Village*'s associative structure as well as its content. Through the child's gaze, everyday items such as the tractor seat or scarecrow are interpreted (in part, through their decontextualization and the film's 'flat' compositions) as abstract objects (figure 6), while soldiers' patrols are reduced to simply repeated motion, in and out of the frame. These strategies of estrangement, in which everyday objects and occurrences begin to look peculiar, encourage the viewer, by extension, to see the transfer and the occupation, which have left this village empty, as themselves strange and unnatural. *Village*, then,

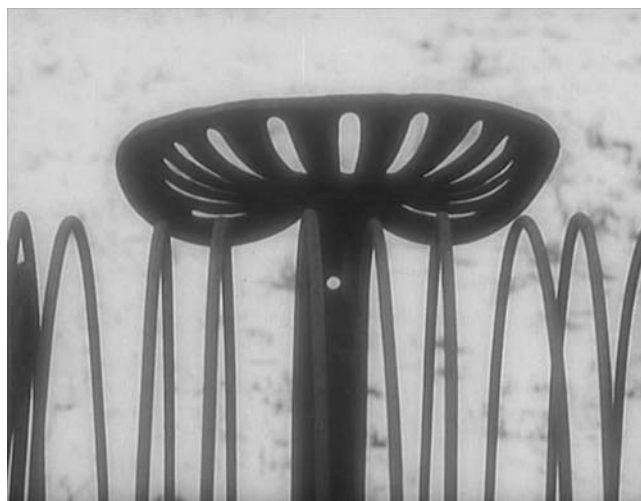


Fig. 6. *Ves/Village* (Vladimír Drha, 1969). By kind permission of Vojenský historický ústav Praha [The Military History Institute, Prague], www.vhu.cz.

41 The commission charged with censoring these films observed: 'Soviet soldiers buy out shops, and then an old woman cannot buy anything. It is an anti-Soviet documentary.' Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 93.

42 Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1966–1970* [Czechoslovak film business 1966–1970] (Prague: Československý filmový ústav, 1975), p. 75.

43 *Filmový přehled*, no. 13 (1969), p. 2.

44 SA AČR Olomouc, fond 397, k. č. 2, sv. 59/3-N 1970, čj. 63/32, Zpráva o činnosti ČAF, 16. února 1970.

45 According to Jiří Havelka, Jiří Purš, who led Czechoslovak State Film throughout the period of 'normalization', was named its director on 23 September 1969. Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1966–1970*, p. 10. By contrast, 'normalization' did not begin in Army Film until November 1970. SA AČR Olomouc, fond 397, k. č. 1, sv. 12/1-U (Tajné spisy 1971), čj. 1971/04/25/Protokol o předání funkce.

is at once a reportage and an estrangement of the images in that reportage, a form that not only echoes the one pioneered by *Metrum* but moves it squarely into the military realm, which it frames as a world out of joint.⁴¹

Lesson, *34 Women* and *Village* were screened in the Short Film Festival in Karlovy Vary in 1969.⁴² While this festival – which took place seven months after the invasion – effectively marked the end of the 'military avant garde's' fleeting public life, it was also where these films were publicly recognized, with the Czechoslovak Journalists' Club awarding Army Film a prize 'for its work [over the period of the invasion]', praising 'the way the artists in this studio gave shape to the problems of the time with an expressive social engagement and artistic responsibility'.⁴³ A similar appraisal of the films appears in the final 'Report on the Fulfillment of the Plan' for 1969, in which the studio's economic deputy, Stanislav Čerovský, moves beyond simple economic justifications for the production of films 'outside the plan'. Writing of a series of such films, Čerovský observes that their goal was 'not as much to illustrate a concrete event as to use it as inspiration for deeper ... human thought'.⁴⁴ Čerovský's choice of words, particularly the terms 'concrete events' and 'deeper human thought', reflect the interplay between reportage and abstraction visible in the films of the 'military avant garde', again emphasizing the close connections between the phenomenon's institutional and formal dimensions.

The 'transfer tetralogy' in many ways resolves one of the central problematics of Army Film's postwar history: the role that the military qua military played in the emergence of the studio's experimental film culture. For, as this essay has discussed, from the very earliest days of military filmmaking in Czechoslovakia the civilian cinematic sphere was something of a structuring absence for the Army studio. In the 1930s and 1940s filmmakers moved with ease between military and civilian productions; in the 1950s civilian filmmaking was an explicit point of comparison and competition for Army Film; and in the 1960s the Army was engaged with similar formal and social questions to those that occupied the Czechoslovak New Wave. Drha and Hložek's films, however, were funded by the military, addressed military subjects, and primarily circulated in the editing rooms (and ultimately the archives) of the Army. Their makers, it is clear, saw themselves not only as artists but also as soldiers of a sort – an unusual situation in a studio whose filmmakers largely adhered to the motto 'better to carry a camera than carry a gun' and to the belief that service in Army Film was far preferable to service in the regular armed forces. Yet by late 1969 the military may have been the *only* Czechoslovak studio in which such experimentation was possible, as Czechoslovak State Film was 'normalized' earlier than Army Film.⁴⁵ The 'military avant garde' here seems less a paradox than a natural outgrowth of the studio and its position in society.

Village offers a further reading of this situation. For if, in military terms, it is the job of the avant garde – the advance guard, the vanguard – to chart new territory, the film's 'estranged' landscape recalls a second kind of

avant garde, the political and artistic avant garde of Shklovsky or Brecht. And in this intertwining between the military and the artistic meanings of the term, the film's images suggest a way to summarize the significance of this experimental film culture that arose within, and because of, the Army. This extends beyond the historiographic resonances of the 'military avant garde'. Its films certainly expand our understanding of the cinematic and social context in which the Czechoslovak New Wave arose, and fill in gaps in our knowledge of its nonfiction and experimental dimensions. They also illustrate the links between 1968 as an 'event' and Czechoslovak cinema, revealing that this year not only provided thematic fodder for documentary filmmakers but that its social dynamics – in temporal and economic discourse, for instance – encouraged filmmakers to work with film *form* in a unique way.

Most fundamentally, however, the significance of the 'military avant garde' has to do with film production and the state. The communist state, its institutions and actors, were closely implicated, structurally and otherwise, in the emergence of this avant garde – and this was a productive relationship, not only one of restriction or censorship. In turn, the paradoxes and dualities that are reflected in the Army's films and the history of their production signal that the relationship between the state and film production in postwar Eastern Europe was far more complex than is implied by the Cold War binaries of collaboration and opposition, 'official' and 'unofficial' – binaries that still largely define discourse on this period. These paradoxes also suggest that attention is due to the productivity of the state – in images, sounds and films – elsewhere.

I would like to thank Nataša Ďurovičová, Masha Salazkina, Katie Trumpener and *Screen's* two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this essay, the research for which was supported by a Fulbright-Hays DDRA Fellowship. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this essay are mine.

Mobilizing lesbian desire: the sexual kinaesthetics of Dorothy Arzner's *The Wild Party*

SUSAN POTTER

In 1929 Dorothy Arzner directed *The Wild Party* (Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation), a film that promised to deliver a witty and salacious story of 'wild party girls' to its cinema audiences. Storyline was not the film's main selling point, however; many contemporary reviews not only summarized the film's plot but also gave away the ending. Although the final scene could not have been a surprise – girl gets boy when Stella Ames (Clara Bow) finally leaves the all-female Winston College with her beau, the new professor of anthropology James 'Gil' Gilmore (Fredric March) – reviewers also cued potential spectators to the pivotal plot event that enabled the formation of the happy couple: Stella's sacrifice of her college place so that her studious friend Helen Owens (Shirley O'Hara) could win a scholarship. Across the discourse of the film's promotion and reception, these parallel plotlines of heterosexual romance and female friendship appear only as necessary scaffolding for the film's central allure: the moving images of Bow and her scantily clad cohort. In likening the film's characters to flappers and chorus girls, and drawing attention to its 'Ziegfeldian atmosphere' – comparisons no doubt prompted by the publicity photos of Bow and her fellow actresses in skimpy fancy-dress costumes – promoters and critics framed the film's appeals in terms of the erotic attractions of the kinetic bodies of women on screen.¹ Although *The Wild Party* was promoted as Paramount's first 'talkie', and as a unique opportunity to hear Clara Bow speak for the first time on the big screen, the feature was actually distributed in sound and silent versions, since new

¹ The quote, from 'The Wild Party', *Times* (Brooklyn), 1 April 1929, alludes to the Ziegfeld Follies, the famous Broadway revue that ran from 1907 to 1931 in New York. This and subsequent reviews (unless otherwise noted) are collected in the Dorothy Arzner Scrapbook, Performing Arts Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

- 2 Theatres in smaller towns and rural areas played the silent version of the film. See David Stenn, *Clara Bow: Runnin' Wild* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988), p. 162. For the silent version's intertitles, see the export script in the Paramount production file, Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.
- 3 On the flapper genre, see Sumiko Higashi, *Virgins, Vamps and Flappers: the American Silent Movie Heroine* (Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1978), pp. 110–31; Marjorie Rosen, *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies and the American Dream* (London: Owen, 1975), pp. 73–94; Mary P. Ryan, 'The projection of a new womanhood: the movie moderns in the 1920s', in Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (eds), *Decades of Discontent: the Women's Movement, 1920-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 113–30. For revisionist work on the flapper genre that has deeply informed the argument for this essay, see Lori Landay, 'The flapper film: comedy, dance and jazz age kinaesthetics', in Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (eds), *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 221–48.
- 4 R. W., Jr, 'The Wild Party', *Herald-Tribune* (New York), 2 April 1929; Joe Bigelow, 'The Wild Party (Dialog)', *Variety*, 3 April 1929; Irene Thirer, 'Clara proved just wild enough in Rialto's new film yesterday', *News* (New York), 1 April 1929.
- 5 Untitled review, *Film Spectator* (Hollywood), 6 April 1929.
- 6 The influence of two key essays that championed the progressive potential of Arzner's film texts is marked by their publication in an important anthology of feminist film criticism, Constance Penley (ed.), *Feminism and Film Theory* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988): Pam Cook, 'Approaching the work of Dorothy Arzner', pp. 36–45, and Claire Johnston, 'Dorothy Arzner: critical strategies', pp. 46–56. See the astute summary of these and two later essays in response (published in the same feminist anthology), in Lee Wallace,

sound technologies were still unevenly distributed across exhibition venues.² The visual attractions of Bow and her onscreen schoolmates thus remained pivotal to sustaining audience interest.

Bow's presence was crucial to *The Wild Party*'s screen appeal. Her stardom, measured in box-office receipts and fan mail, made her Paramount's most profitable and popular actress, while Arzner was a young, ambitious director and the only woman working in that role in the Hollywood studios. In the wake of Bow's 1927 smash hit *It* (Clarence G. Badger, Famous Players–Lasky Corporation), Arzner's direction of Bow in her transition to sound endeavoured to sustain Bow's signature star qualities, not only through sensitive direction of the actress herself but also by deploying the narrative and visual protocols of the flapper film. A nearly exhausted genre by the late 1920s, the familiar conventions of the flapper film ensured the ongoing cultural legibility of Bow's hypersexualized, kinetic persona.³ Arzner had directed Bow two years earlier in *Get Your Man*, but *The Wild Party*, conceived as a low-risk star vehicle, proved to be a more significant production in Arzner's career. Reviewers of the latter film recognized not only Arzner's talent in directing Bow but also her handling of story material variously described as 'tedious', 'silly', and 'impossible'.⁴ As one trade review noted, seemingly without any deliberate innuendo, 'much of the attraction of the picture is undoubtedly due to the director's sympathetic touch'.⁵ Arzner had already honed her skills on four other Paramount productions and the commercial success of *The Wild Party* marked the beginning of the high point of her Hollywood studio career, one that would continue for more than a decade into the early 1940s.

The Wild Party might have registered in the history of classical cinema only as an example of generic Hollywood product but for its recuperation via retrospective screenings several decades later that fuelled the reevaluation of Arzner and her films. As the only woman to have a directorial career of any longevity in the Hollywood studio period, Arzner presented a unique figure through whom scholars could reconsider the masculinist paradigms of film theory and practice. Shown at various forums including women's film festivals and archive-curated programmes from the 1960s onwards, Arzner's rediscovered *oeuvre* provoked sustained attention from feminist critics who discerned in her work the possibility of a feminine discourse that revealed, and disrupted, the dominant patriarchal ideologies of classical Hollywood cinema.⁶ Yet *The Wild Party* was never a key text in this critical project, in part because its commodified versions of femininity did not fit the feminist celebration of Arzner, whose most significant films were deemed to be those that offered complex and independent female characters, such as *Christopher Strong* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1933), or moments that explicitly critiqued a gendered and hierarchical structure of looking, most famously in *Dance, Girl, Dance* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1940).

Not only were the frivolous themes and characters of *The Wild Party* already questionable in a feminist scholarship geared towards

'Dorothy Arzner's *Wife*: heterosexual sets, homosexual scenes', *Screen*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2008), pp. 391–409.

- 7 Programme note for a retrospective screening of *The Wild Party* by William K. Everson, cited by Andrea Weiss, *Vampires and Violets: Lesbians in the Cinema* (London: Cape, 1992), p. 14, n. 17.
- 8 Weiss, *Vampires and Violets*, pp. 13–14.
- 9 As Judith Mayne has convincingly demonstrated, images of Arzner in early feminist film scholarship in which the 'mannish' director is seen working with various women stars, her female masculinity aligned with the masculine apparatus of the camera, draw attention to while simultaneously disavowing knowledge of Arzner's homosexuality. See Judith Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 170–74.
- 10 Ibid. Mayne's monograph develops her earlier work on Arzner in *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 89–123, and 'Lesbian looks: Dorothy Arzner and female authorship', in *Bad Object-Choices* (ed.), *How Do I Look?: Queer Film and Video* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1991), pp. 103–43.
- 11 Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*, pp. 132–39.
- 12 On Morgan's work and her long-time relationship with Arzner, see Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*, pp. 40–45.
- 13 'Representability', a term developed by Patricia White, foregrounds not only the complex conditions and structures of lesbian cinematic representation in Hollywood cinema, but also its inter- and extratextual dimensions. See Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- 14 Evidence on women's filmgoing is scanty yet it does suggest that the proportion of women in cinema audiences increased throughout the 1920s and that by the end of the decade women formed the

emancipatory interpretations of Hollywood cinema, they were inflected with another, apparently more dubious, pleasure. For by the time of its repertory screenings in the 1960s, *The Wild Party* had accrued a specifically sexual reputation as 'a kind of "Lesbiantics of 1929"'.⁷ The film historian who first draws our attention to this reputation, William K. Everson, does so only to insist that it was entirely manufactured. Implicitly invoking another sexual reputation, that of the film's butch lesbian director, Everson's review attempts to maintain a purely heterosexual discourse circulating in relation to the appeals of Bow and the other mostly anonymous but physically attractive supporting characters. His interdict against reading too much into the film – that is, too much lesbianism – is in part a homophobic attempt to devalue the film's queer viewing pleasures, including the 'subtextual lesbian dynamic' of certain scenes between Stella and Helen.⁸ Everson's overly anxious prescription of heterosexual modes of spectatorship only provides further evidence that *The Wild Party*'s unsettling erotic effects remain difficult to quarantine and thus require strenuous denial. The denial of feminist critics takes on a more ambivalent and subtle form. Unable to address directly either Arzner's sexuality or the unpredictable erotic pleasures of her films, feminist critics instead symptomatically deferred those matters to the homoerotic behind-the-scenes images that illustrated their scholarly arguments.⁹ For 1970s feminist film scholarship, a critical recuperation of *The Wild Party* remained precarious and paradoxical, wholly dependent on a revisionist history of the Hollywood films of its director that nonetheless maintained a rigorous silence on the relevance of the film to the director's body of work.

It is no accident, then, that the groundbreaking monograph that addresses the sexual reputation of *The Wild Party* and its director is also an auteur study. Judith Mayne's *Directed by Dorothy Arzner* explicitly intervenes in feminist scholarship by making the relationship between Arzner's sexuality and *oeuvre* central not only to her reevaluation of the director's Hollywood career but also to the interpretation of *The Wild Party*.¹⁰ Drawing out the significance of the film as one of several in Arzner's filmography that focuses on the bonds between women in all-female communities, Mayne singles out the narrative significance of dance as a meaningful social ritual that defines, among other things, the relationships of the young college women to each other.¹¹ Mayne's insistence that we connect female homosociality and friendship with dance in turn rests on the interconnections between Arzner's personal and working life: her longtime companion, Marion Morgan, was also the choreographer on all of Arzner's earlier films for the Paramount Studio.¹² If dance and lesbian sexuality are connected through overlapping autobiographical and film production histories, the implications for lesbian cinematic representability are less clear.¹³ While there is no specific lesbian figure in *The Wild Party*, the film's promotional rhetoric and critical reception reflected and further cultivated the interest of its predominantly female audience in the exuberant and eroticized flappers on screen.¹⁴ In bracketing off lesbianism as

significant majority. See the one-off surveys and reports discussed in Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: the Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), p. 30. It seems clear that the industry itself operated on this assumption. See Gaylyn Studlar, 'The perils of pleasure? Fan magazine discourse as women's commodified culture in the 1920s', *Wide Angle*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1991), p. 7.

15 White, *Uninvited*, p. xix, citing Laura Mulvey's well-known phrase from 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema'.

16 Only months before production began on *The Wild Party*, the obscenity trial of Radclyffe Hall's novel on female inversion, *The Well of Loneliness*, had concluded in Britain, a cultural event with international reverberations that crystallized the image of Hall herself as that of the mannish lesbian. See Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: the Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 164–94. By the end of the year *Pandora's Box* (G. W. Pabst, 1929) would be released in the USA, a film often regarded as the first with a fully-fledged lesbian character.

17 For the paradigmatic discussion of the connotation of homosexuality in Hollywood cinema, see D. A. Miller, 'Anal Rope', *Representations*, no. 32 (1990), pp. 114–33. On Hollywood's pre-Production Code censorship arrangements, see Ruth Vasey, 'Beyond sex and violence: "industry policy" and the regulation of Hollywood movies, 1922-1939', in Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (London: Athlone, 2000), pp. 102–4; Richard B. Jewell, *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood, 1929-1945* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 113–16.

historically constituted only in terms of illness and disease, distinct from the complex erotics of female friendship visualized in *The Wild Party*, Mayne's auteurist analysis forecloses a more extended consideration of Hollywood cinema's generative role in the production of new erotic capacities and modern sexual identities. As Patricia White has argued, it was precisely in this new mass culture context, one which 'encouraged female consumerism and emphasised women's "to-be-looked-at-ness"', that new lesbian subjectivities and identities emerged.¹⁵

The Wild Party's kinetic energies, its female-oriented spectatorship, and the physically dynamic persona of its star, suggest that we should consider the film's larger cultural scene of looking and moving in order to think again about the historical conditions that enable the cinematic articulation of same-sex desires and lesbian possibilities. In many ways it is the timing of *The Wild Party*'s production and release that makes it an ideal film text through which to reconsider the kinetic attractions of women on screen and their relation to the representability of lesbian sexuality in Hollywood cinema. The film is produced at a significant historical moment when the lesbian as a modern sexual figure is being consolidated across a variety of different visual cultures.¹⁶ Yet even in this formative context *The Wild Party* remains an awkward transitional text that puts pressure on the accepted chronologies and historiographies of Hollywood cinema and its representations of sexuality. While several of the film's key scenes between Bow and her friend Helen appear to connote lesbian desire, such meanings are dependent on a practice of decoding visual cues that is itself historical, profoundly shaped by a representational regime that postdates *The Wild Party*'s release: the Hollywood Production Code.¹⁷ Nor do current genre histories adequately explain the film's wayward erotics. Histories of the flapper film cycle are inclined to overemphasize and thus overdetermine the genre's heterosexual meanings and visual pleasures without considering the usually fraught but co-constitutive relationship between hetero- and homosexuality. Rather than isolating certain scenes in *The Wild Party* for their lesbian subtext, in what follows I trace how under Arzner's direction the erotic kinaesthetics of the flapper genre are mobilized across the entire film in order to render such scenes sexually intelligible. On one level the centrality of the spectacle of moving feminine bodies in *The Wild Party* reiterates the dominant critical understanding that the developing ideological and institutional structures of Hollywood classical cinema ensure that homosexual representation becomes possible at the level of image rather than story. But while the terms 'spectacle' and 'narrative' animate the following discussion of *The Wild Party*'s generic history, ultimately it is Arzner's refusal to sustain a corresponding division between hetero- and homosexuality that enables her to visualize, however fleetingly, one of Hollywood's first lesbian couples.

Even before the film proper begins, *The Wild Party* stakes out its generic credentials as its opening credits fade in over a stylized drawing of four

- 18 That the film's flappers are rendered briefly in stylized silhouette, as black shapes with clothing suggestive of grass skirts, suggests how the discursive figure of the white feminine flapper masks the racial ideologies that partly enable her. One of the explicit thematics threaded through the film's story is a certain popular sense of primitivism, associated with African-American jazz music and new popular dances of the 1920s, that becomes linked to new modern (hetero)sexual desires. Gil's anthropological interest in certain ethnic tribes in exotic countries, for example, is a diegetic detail that allows Gil and Stella to call each other my 'little savage'.
- 19 This scene survives in the only remaining reel of the film held by the Library of Congress, Washington DC.
- 20 For George Chauncey, the flapper epitomizes new complex and restrictive sex/gender roles, 'at once both sexually precocious and profoundly heterosexual'. George Chauncey, 'From sexual inversion to homosexuality: medicine and the changing conceptualization of female deviance', *Salmagundi*, nos 58/59 (1983), p. 144.
- 21 On the flapper as a figure who lives to consume, see Martin Pumphrey, 'The flapper, the housewife and the making of modernity', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1987), p. 186.
- 22 Dorothy Arzner, quoted in Grace Kingsley, 'The only woman director: the dramatic story of Dorothy Arzner', *Screen Book*, May 1929, pp. 61–65.
- 23 Landay, 'The flapper film', p. 231.
- 24 Hillel Schwartz, 'Torque: the new kinaesthetic of the twentieth century', in Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds), *Incorporations* (New York, NY: Zone, 1992), pp. 85–96.
- 25 My brief discussion of the kinaesthetics of 1920s fashion is indebted to the outline of this shift in Cynthia Felando, 'Clara Bow is It', in Andrew Willis (ed.), *Film Stars: Hollywood and Beyond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 9.

slim dancing women, their arms raised in the air like art deco statuettes. The sexual potential of these flapper figures is signified by the fringed skirts that draw attention to their boyish hips and 'jungle' rhythms.¹⁸ Freezing a party moment in time and space, the flattened graphic style recalls the backlit pool-party scene of *Flaming Youth* (John Dillon, Associated First National Pictures, 1923), a film often regarded as the first in the flapper film cycle.¹⁹ Beyond referencing its cinematic antecedents, however, the opening image should be situated in terms of the wider cultural familiarity of the flapper. The pared-down formal qualities of the image and the varied repetition of the dancing woman motif exemplify the ways in which the flapper is constituted as a reproducible and highly legible mobile figure. The aesthetic simplicity of the image ensures that the figures are instantly recognizable and readable in one glance as representing a new kinetic femininity and a precocious heterosexuality.²⁰ Yet the reduction in detail and visual signifiers to which meaning might accrue also produces a degree of opacity or blankness. This modernist aesthetic was no doubt one of the flapper's appeals. In her incarnation as a figure of advertising narratives, for example, she could become a pliant character able to embody a range of different products and experiences.²¹ As a figure discursively constituted not only cinematically but also across other equally ephemeral sites of popular culture, the flapper proved to be a malleable and kinetic body through which new ideas, cultural practices and ideologies of women's modern mobilities and desires could be articulated. Arzner herself proclaimed: 'I like flappers. ... They have broken through conventions, and will leave the thing open for a girl in the next generation to be a lady and yet to be free. They have done all the hard work and are getting all the criticism.'²² In what follows, I trace briefly how the flapper figure emerges as the product of new forms of physical movement, female fashion and popular dance, before considering the particular role of cinema in animating the flapper as the mobile embodiment of modern femininity.

The flapper's defining quality, her kineticism, would not have been possible but for the development of radically new kinaesthetic ideals and practices that emerged out of the late nineteenth century. As Lori Landay remarks in her survey of these historical transformations – from the Dress Reform movement to the popularity of Delsartian philosophy and dance classes – 'there were social currents that sought to liberate women from the physical and material confines of Victorian ladyhood'.²³ New kinaesthetic discourses linked rhythmic, spontaneous and centred bodily movements to psychological health, and suggested that a lack of movement, or the lack of responsiveness to the body's need to move, was problematic.²⁴ Fashion was one site of popular culture integral to reshaping the ways in which women could hold and move their bodies.²⁵ Not only did women's modes of presentation become more physically free, athletic even, their gestures and styles of movement, for instance swinging the arms while walking, were meant to confirm this new sense of freedom and mobility. Contemporary fashion practitioners and later historians discerned in

26 Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1978), p. 332.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

28 Elizabeth Kendall, *Where She Danced: the Birth of American Art-Dance* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), p. 195.

29 This gesture had evolved from a 'genteel slapping of the backside'. Barbara Cohen-Stratyner, "'A thousand raggy, draggy dances': social dance in Broadway musical comedy in the 1920s", in Julie Malnig (ed.), *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: a Social and Popular Dance Reader* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 223.

1920s fashion a fundamental shift to a lithe kinetic form that also intensified and eroticized the body's movement. Historian Anne Hollander argues that the new designs and cuts of skirts and dresses were meant to be best seen 'in an instant of walking or dancing, conversing or gesturing'; but even when standing still the flapper would look 'posed as if pausing' before moving again.²⁶ This 'look of possible movement' signified a new sexual potential: 'Immanent sexuality, best expressed in a condition of stasis, was no longer the foundation of feminine allure'.²⁷ These shifts in fashion, premised on the need to visualize women's bodies in motion, were inextricably linked with the expansion and intensification of modern visual cultures. In place of Victorian feminine ideals of quiet poise and restraint emerged a new modern dialectic of sexualized stasis and motion premised on the need to be seen to move.

The novel kinetic and spectacular forms of 1920s fashion drew on, and were productively reinforced by, the new kinaesthetic vocabulary of popular and social dances such as the Charleston, the Shimmy and the Black Bottom. Dance historian Elizabeth Kendall describes their innovative ways of moving:

The Charleston, to a jerky syncopation, almost tied the knees together but let the feet twist crazily against the floor and the arms either flap in opposition or make Egyptian-type designs on top. In the black bottom the backside was identified as something that moved; the arms slapped the bobbing backside as if to push the whole person forward through the pelvis. In general the torso, like the geometric dresses that covered it, was seen to contain surprise pieces of itself that promised whimsical expression.²⁸

Radically different from the slower-paced, formal and paired dances of the previous century, these new dances enacted a complex shifting pattern of erotic and de-eroticized fragmented movements. Some were sexual, such as overtly suggestive pelvic or hip movements, or gestures that drew attention to erogenous body zones, such as the Black Bottom gesture akin to striking a match on one's hip.²⁹ Others rendered the limbs as jerky machine-like parts. In her description quoted above, Kendall emphasizes the quality of the movements of the new popular dances in which the body could reveal something different and unexpected, could be made strange or denaturalized. Dance curator Barbara Cohen-Stratyner, on the other hand, emphasizes the new dances' mode and style of performance and argues that it was certain elements of performance that made one specific dance – one closely associated with the flapper – most persistent throughout the 1920s:

More than any other dance, [the Charleston] defined the performer as young and willing to take chances on modern life. It managed to be both trendy and individualistic because it was concurrently hard to dance and easy to self-choreograph. In fact, the multiple movements that define the Charleston could be emphasized, deemphasized, or even

31 Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: the Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1994), p. 112.

32 Moral discourse registered this new mobility and its potential for both expressing and generating socially unsanctioned forms of eroticism and desire. As one commentator observed, rather hysterically, 'The rhythm of the jazz age has infected our sex life. ... The modern mad quest for stimulation is driving men and women into the arms of abnormality.' S. D. Schmalhausen, 'The Freudian emphasis on sex', in John Francis McDermott (ed.), *The Sex Problem in Modernity Society* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 1931), p. 64, quoted in Christina Simmons, 'Companionate marriage and the lesbian threat', *Frontiers: a Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1979), p. 56.

33 For a discussion of the institutional connections between modern dance and the Hollywood film industry in the 1910s and 1920s, see Paul B. Franklin, 'The terpsichorean tramp: unmanly movement in the early films of Charlie Chaplin', in Jane Desmond (ed.), *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 58–59. On dance as a primary signifier of modern femininity (the others being smoking and 'unladylike comportment'), see Landay, 'The flapper film', p. 233.

dropped by different choreographers (for stage) and people (for social situations).³⁰

While Cohen-Stratyner goes on to point out the suitability of the Charleston to differently gendered fashions, she also implicitly suggests that the dance moves themselves enabled and enacted a new gendered mobility. There is historical evidence to suggest that certain movements and dances were understood in terms of gender. In the case of the Charleston, dance historians Marshall and Jean Stearns claim that it was the first new popular dance step taken up more by men than by women, since the earlier Shimmy had been seen as too effeminate.³¹ The sexual implication of this gendered division is, however, too coarse. If particular moves of the Charleston were regarded as more masculine, performers could also adopt and adapt other moves from the Shimmy and the Black Bottom – moves that might be regarded as more feminine or more sexual – to their own style and personality. It was the inbuilt flexibility of the dance steps of the Charleston that enabled performers to articulate new and complex gendered and sexual identities, identities that were predicated on presenting the spectacle of a body in motion for a watching audience.³²

This flexible dimension of popular dances and their adaptability to both public spectacle and more intimate social display meshed with the thematic content and formal structure of the Hollywood flapper film cycle. Since the mid 1910s both popular and high-art forms of dance had been increasingly incorporated into the plotlines of Hollywood films but, for flapper films, popular dances of the 1920s become one of the primary signifiers of new modern femininities.³³ The opening scene of *Love 'Em and Leave 'Em* (Frank Tuttle, Paramount Famous Lasky, 1926) efficiently encapsulates the social significance of popular dance in an economical series of shots motivated by the movements and looks of Mame Walsh (Evelyn Brent): having crossed her shared bedroom to close an open window, she casts a sharp glance at a heap of discarded clothes and then at the peaceful sleeping face of her younger sister Janie (Louise Brooks). The reason for Janie's late-night antics is revealed by Mame's point-of-view closeup of Janie's first prize for a Charleston Competition, a doll whose feet whirl back and forth. The narrative moment requires the film to condense the flapper's undesirable traits into a single image of an automaton-like wind-up doll, but the film later capitalizes on the erotic appeal of the dancing flapper when it pans up and down Brooks's body as she shimmies and shakes at a fancy dress party. The doll's disturbing mechanical movements are rendered visually pleasurable in the spectacular figure of Brooks, a flapper figure animated by another invisible mechanical technology, the cinematograph.

In later flapper films, cinema's technological capacity to animate and eroticize the flapper's body is made more explicit. The opening sequence of *Our Dancing Daughters* (Harry Beaumont, Cosmopolitan Productions, 1928) converts a stilled female body into one in almost constant motion. An initial static image of a metallic art deco figurine set against a grey

background is transformed, via a series of dissolves, to a pair of high-heeled shoes that are filled, through further dissolves, with a pair of feet that begin to twist and kick in a syncopated rhythm. The three-way mirror in the background reflects and repeats the image of dancing feet, creating a fetishistic metonym for the woman's mobile body. The broad cultural shift from stasis to movement that characterized new kinaesthetic femininities is isolated and made visible by the camera, but it is also the meaning ascribed to and generated by specific dance movements that signifies the modernity of the unseen woman. The transformation from inanimate to animated figure that subjects the feminine flapper to cinema's regime of 'visible mechanics' was inseparable from, and reliant on, new forms of dance, that other technology of the body, to coopt and shape the frenetic movements of cinema's 'wild party girl'.³⁴

As spectacles of unrepressed flapperdom, dance scenes are moments in which the disciplinary power of sexuality is forcefully expressed through moving images of the body. Feminist critics have argued that the meanings and significance of dance scenes for female spectators regularly exceeded their narrow (hetero)sexualized representations and narratives.³⁵ In her discussion of Joan Crawford's famous wild dancing scenes in *Our Dancing Daughters*, Mary P. Ryan insists that the images signify her character's 'gusto and liveliness', and surpass the sexual objectification that shots of 'lustful male faces' attempt to accomplish.³⁶ In asserting the female character's subjectivity, Ryan's interpretation relies on a reading of the dance movements themselves, of the individualized expressivity made possible by the steps of dances such as the Charleston and Black Bottom that Crawford skilfully interweaves into her performance. Broadening the social and cultural context for such scenes, Landay suggests that they provided moments of intense kinaesthetic identification for female spectators who could actively and subjectively identify with the flapper character through her dance movements.³⁷ Landay draws on dance scholar Susan Manning's historical argument that middle-class women's experience of Delsartian dance classes and aesthetic gymnastics led them to identify more intensely with the movements of women performers on stage.³⁸ If modern dance could be the location for a new modern mode of spectatorship for women, Landay extends this claim to flapper films, arguing that the wide-ranging experiences of women involved in various forms of physical culture, popular dance and other kinaesthetic cultural practices of the early twentieth century shaped their cinema spectatorship. Women's kinaesthetic identifications with onscreen flappers could generate feelings of freedom and possibility outside of any objectifying male gaze, a 'ludic embodiment of femininity' that surpassed the limitations of any self-commodification determined by the consumer and commodity cultures within which flapper films were embedded.³⁹

Since the meanings and symbolism of dance often exceeded in unexpected ways its narrative framings, even as it also transmitted new forms of social and sexual regulation and discipline, dance offered a flexible corporeal site through which the erotics of the flapper genre could

34 Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Machines of the visible', in Teresa De Lauretis and Stephen Heath (eds), *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 123.

35 For a compact summary of the flapper generic narrative, see Studlar, 'The perils of pleasure?', p. 20.

36 Ryan, 'The projection of a new womanhood', p. 116.

37 Landay, 'The flapper film', p. 234. Landay builds on the critical shift in feminist film studies of the past two decades that has aimed to broaden the methodological and theoretical foundations for understanding women's cinema spectatorship in the early twentieth century. Key essays are: Miriam Hansen, 'Early cinema: whose public sphere?', *New German Critique*, no. 29 (1983), pp. 147–84; Studlar, 'The perils of pleasure?'.

38 Susan Manning, 'The female dancer and the male gaze: feminist critiques of early modern dance', in Jane Desmond (ed.), *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 162–63. Manning makes an important distinction between the representation of feminine types in modern dance and spectators' kinaesthetic identification with the movements of dancers, a distinction that implicitly suggests a degree of disidentification with the former.

39 Landay, 'The flapper film', p. 223.

be reworked in more explicitly homoerotic directions. Landay's provocative notion of women's cinematic spectatorship precludes this possibility, implicitly opposing identification to desire premised on sexual difference, a conceptual move that simultaneously allows Landay to claim identification as a mode of transcendence. An attention to the place of dance and, more broadly, the choreography of bodily movement in *The Wild Party*, on the other hand, suggests how the eroticism that underwrites the intense kinaesthetic identifications of women's new modern spectatorships might bear a close but less acknowledged relationship to same-sex desires and sexualities. Rather than quarantining desire from identification, Arzner's subtle tweaking of the kinaesthetics of the flapper genre in *The Wild Party* makes the two difficult to distinguish, the one enfolded within the other, their mutual dependence enabled by new and modern forms of feminine movement. As Diana Fuss has argued in a different context, often the 'bonds of identification provide the critical channels' for the transport of desire.⁴⁰ In the late 1920s, at the tail end of the flapper film cycle, it is the relation of modern women's shared forms of movement to spectacle and display – both diegetic and cinematic – that opens up the potential for same-sex desire, since women's kinaesthetic identifications with one another, secured by similar corporeal expression and kinetic experience, depend on a continual movement between being the subject of looking and its object. Kinaesthetic identification, to reorient Landay's formulation, does not transcend the sexual objectification of the feminine but rather puts it into mobile play, and thus continually generates the possibility of same-sex desire.

Arzner was well positioned to understand the complex appeals of dance in flapper films and the cinematic elements of what was by the late 1920s a deeply familiar genre. As I have already mentioned, her understanding of movement and modern dance forms was informed by her directing experience prior to *The Wild Party* but also augmented by her personal involvement with the choreographer on those earlier films, Marion Morgan. It is the place of dance within the developing modern kinaesthetics and spectatorships of 1920s culture that provides the cinematic and cultural framework through which Arzner can represent eroticism between women. Early on, *The Wild Party*'s 'Costume' dance scene establishes the terms by which the film sets out to recalibrate the cinematic figure of the dancing flapper.⁴¹ Billed by an intertitle as the 'feminine equivalent to the stag', the Costume scene's kinaesthetic coordinates are established with a closeup of blurred dancing shoes – moccasins, low-heeled pumps and boots – tapping out frenetic steps to the syncopated rhythms of the film's theme tune. The heel-twists and cross-kicks of these dancing feet mirror those of the kinetic shoes that open *Our Dancing Daughters*, but the tracking shot reveals not a lone woman performing for herself and the camera but rather an assortment of costumed women – telegraph girls, pirates, cavegirls and Native Americans – all dancing vigorously in couples. The spectacle and individualistic expressivity of popular dance is reoriented into a same-sex

40 Fuss makes this critical point in relation to Dorothy Strachey's novel/fictional memoir *Olivia* (1949). Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers: Readings on Psychoanalysis, Sexuality and Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), p. 125.

41 The proposed rerelease of *The Wild Party* by Paramount in 1938 suggests that its homoeroticism had sustained if not renewed appeal. The Production Code Administration office required further cuts to the film, however, and the request for a rerelease was eventually cancelled. See the Motion Picture Producers & Distributors of America – Production Code Administration file, Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles.

paired set of rhythmic gestures so that the dancers perform for and with each other as much as for any diegetic or filmic audience. The performance of the dancers is clearly visible only as couples dance into the centre of the screen, but they quickly circulate back into the crowd, their movements oriented towards their partners as well as to the inner space of the ballroom as they turn their backs to the camera and the spectator. The focus of the dancing spectacle is instead transferred to the characters who next enter the frame.

While the camera's track back distances the spectator from the space of the ballroom, the scene's first cut establishes a closer, voyeuristic relation to the feminine body. In a disorienting closeup, a satin shoe with sequinned brooch and matching glittering heel steps into view. More glamorous than those that opened the scene, the shiny shoe is soon followed by several identical pairs that cross the frame in careful synchronicity. This more overt eroticism accomplished by both camera and costuming is confirmed in the following wide shot, when Stella and her three friends, wrapped in sumptuous thigh-length fur coats, appear at the edge of the lobby area. Rushing across to a cloakroom, they fling off their furs to reveal sequinned bathing suits. The design itself suggests the metaphorical shock of their apparel, with its white zigzag lightning bolt that threatens to split open the front of each costume. As the group sashays screen right, the women strike a pose with their bodies facing both the camera and their interlocutor Faith Morgan (Marceline Day), who has emerged from the ballroom in order to prevent them from entering it (figure 1). Their matching movements and costumes heighten their already excessive femininity and sexuality by denying individuality to any one body; their seriality implies a potentially limitless repeatability. The image of Stella and friends as synchronized chorines evokes the famous Tiller Girls dancing troupe, and their playful rendering of Tilleresque militaristic precision contrasts starkly with the freer, more expressive dancing behind them inside the ballroom.⁴² With their coordinated movement across the lobby, and their identical costumes, the fake showgirls transform the space into an imaginary dance stage, both diegetically and for the film's spectators.

Although the Costume scene establishes a narrative ruse for the erotic display of Stella's chorus line, unlike earlier flapper films the visual organization of the scene does not rely on the presence of a diegetic heterosocial audience or male spectator to establish any heterosexual credentials. Although the initial homosocial scene of the ballroom might also suggest a homosexual scene, this possibility is less sexually intelligible than the entry of Stella's girl gang into the lobby space. The dialogue skirts around the problem of the overt sexuality signified by their skimpy costumes and playful showgirl routine. Faith refuses them entry into the ballroom fearing their influence on the 'younger and weaker' girls, while Stella protests 'aren't we all made the same?' (In a playful visual irony, Faith's moralizing stance is reinforced by her costume, a fetching Little Bo-Peep outfit complete with shepherdess's crook.) Faith's

⁴² The Tiller Girls were a well-known British precision dance troupe active from the late nineteenth century, brought to critical attention and fame by Siegfried Kracauer's use of them as an 'historico-philosophical allegory' for Fordist mass culture in the essay 'The mass ornament'. See Miriam Hansen, 'America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on cinema and modernity', in Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 374–75; see also p. 371 for the translated extract from an earlier review by Kracauer of a Tiller Girls performance.

Fig. 1. Publicity still from *The Wild Party* (Dorothy Arzner, 1929). By kind permission of NBC Universal.



line ostensibly points to the chorus girls' status as bad heterosexual role models, but Stella's response amplifies Faith's admonition in a more complex way. While jesting about Faith's concerns that their presence in the ballroom may encourage improper identifications if not imitations, in a roundabout way Stella's appeal to a bodily uniformity beneath the costumes ('made the same') implicitly addresses another possible reading of Faith's dialogue, that their projection of overt feminine sexuality may incite desire in the young women who see them. Stella's response implies its opposite: that an externally visible and embodied femininity may not map so easily onto a corresponding uniformity of interiorized sexual desire. The sexual stakes of the dialogue remain unresolved and are only magnified by the visual organization and kinaesthetics of the scene. If it is tempting to assign a greater weight to the chorines and their highly sexualized aesthetics in the formation of feminine heterosexual identities, Arzner refuses such easy divisions. Instead the scene suggests the limits of vision in representing sexuality, and the ways in which a kinetic feminine aesthetic and sexualization mask the possibility of lesbian desire.⁴³

The uncertainty of knowing what sexual desires and identity the kinetic female body signifies is worked through in the following scene, in which Stella and friends, denied entry to the ballroom, head off to the local roadhouse. In plot terms, this and the following scenes facilitate the heterosexual romance between Gil and Stella, since Gil has to rescue Stella from roadhouse mashers. The roadhouse scene dramatizes the sexual consequence of looking and being looked at in ways that provide a spectatorial alibi for its female audience. In a shot/reverse-shot sequence, a group of older men ogle the young women: the shots establish their gaze

⁴³ Judith Mayne argues that the scene (particularly together with the following roadhouse scene) can be read in two opposing ways, 'as a repression of sexuality, or, conversely, as a refusal of stereotypical associations of women with sexual objectification'. Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*, p. 135. Reading the film in terms of its kinaesthetic imagery suggests how its same-sex erotics might deflect both of those possible interpretations.

as resting on the women's bare legs lined up at the bar. Misreading them as showgirls, the drunken mashers attempt some heavy-handed flirting that soon turns into a melee during which they kidnap Stella. By explicitly dramatizing the cinematic gaze as gendered (male) and (hetero)sexual, *The Wild Party* grants a privileged knowingness to the audience about the 'real' identity of the young women, even as it simultaneously continues to exploit the same visual pleasures of kinetic feminine bodies that animated the previous scene.

Incorporating the sexually rapacious gaze of the roadhouse mashers into the narrative deflects attention from the film's more subtle organization of space and structures of homoerotic looking. As showgirls in masquerade, the bodies of Stella and her comrades promise an already eroticized performance through dance and rhythmic coordination. *The Wild Party* extends this erotic promise to more everyday feminine movements that are multiplied across the film's visual field. The film's very first scene playfully inverts the dance routine imitated by Stella's chorus line while also covertly establishing the central attractions, and distractions, of the moving feminine body for its female audiences. The scene opens with several young women, clad only in their negligees, lounging on a couch eating chocolates, while Babs (Adrienne Doré) sits on the edge of a table putting on her eye makeup. In the foreground Maisie (Alice Adair), clad only in a tight sleeveless top and tiny shorts, lies back on the floor while moving her raised legs back and forth in a scissoring motion. As Maisie goes through her calisthenic routine, a circuit of glances visually connects all the characters: the girls on the sofa in the background watch Maisie and Babs, while Babs watches herself in the mirror and glances down at Maisie as she performs her upside-down showgirl routine. The offscreen presence of the audience viewing the scene is mirrored diegetically by the out-of-focus young women seated on the couch. Yet any onscreen allegorical evidence of the pleasures of a predominantly female audience in watching another woman's body in motion remains obscured, since any clear vision of them is continually interrupted by the oscillations of opening and closing legs. The kinetic female body itself screens from view the identifications and desires that it provokes. Those identifications and desires, intertwined and dynamic, are constituted as part of a restless gaze that is only momentarily short-circuited with a cut to the next part of the scene. With the length of the shot, the network of glances, and the central framing of Maisie's moving bare limbs, *The Wild Party* institutes a mobile gaze that is guaranteed to return repeatedly to the distracting attractions of her leggy locomotions, even as it is never held long enough to suture the spectator into a more voyeuristic viewing position. By framing the moving female body in this way, the film builds the broader same-sex kinaesthetic identifications of female spectatorship into its dynamic structure of looking, a structure that is predicated on sustaining and amplifying desire without any resolution.

By the 1920s female spectatorship was increasingly organized via the star system around specific bodies, and in the case of *The Wild Party* around that of Clara Bow. Even though Hollywood could call upon plenty of ambitious starlets to perform flapper roles – indeed part of the advance publicity for the film included a call for new talent – *The Wild Party*’s appeal and its kinetic effects are inseparable from its star. Hollywood’s ultimate ‘wild party girl’, Bow was considered to embody the kinetic potential of the flapper at its most extreme. Promoted early on in her career as the ‘ultra-flapper’, Bow was regarded as the most mobile performer of all the flapper actresses of the 1920s, even when compared to her contemporaries Colleen Moore and Joan Crawford.⁴⁴ Reviewers, fans and producers constantly commented on and exaggerated her energetic performances.⁴⁵ The film most often held to exemplify this is *It* (1927), with its scenes of Bow, as Betty Lou, tumbling down a slide at Coney Island and whirling around the ‘social mixer’ with her male romantic lead, a visual dynamic reinforced by music and fast-paced cutting. The conception of Bow’s acting style in terms of movement extended to her ‘look’, an ambiguous term that referred both to her cultivated image and her dynamic eye movements and facial expressions.⁴⁶

While the emerging conventions of Hollywood classical cinema showcased and reinforced Bow’s eye-play and mobility, these performances were also read in the context of film promotion, fan stories and news reports about her hectic and often scandalous love life. In one exemplary story, partly a publicity stunt, it was reported that a football player had tried to commit suicide after Clara rejected him; he had accused her of kissing him so hard that his lips ached for two days.⁴⁷ If Bow’s hyper-heterosexuality was confirmed by this sexualized discourse, she often intervened to moderate it, whether through stories of her difficult childhood or her explicit disidentification with her onscreen characters.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the cinematic exploitation of Bow’s kineticism and extracinematic sexual discourse mutually reinforced one another, often disrupting the conservative sexual ideological terms of the Hollywood films in which she appeared. Reading *It*, the quintessential flapper film of the 1920s, critics agree that Bow’s ‘overwhelming dynamic eroticism’ problematizes the ideological determinants of the film’s plot, including the companionate marriage that is its narrative endpoint.⁴⁹ Operating more broadly than the erotic spectacle of dance scenes in flapper films, Bow’s physical performances readily functioned as the corporeal location through which other, less ideologically conservative, erotic meanings could emerge.

Until the release of *The Wild Party*, Bow’s ‘it’ was deployed in the service of heterosexual romance narratives, yet the notion of ‘it’ – much like Bow’s capacity for movement – had a troubling openness. What is notable in the discourses of promotion, fandom and marketing around Bow and her films is the considerable, if not excessive, rhetorical labour invested in heterosexualizing ‘it’. In the eponymous film, a scene is even

44 Glenn Chaffin, writing in *Photoplay Magazine* in 1925, describes Bow as the ‘ultra-flapper’. See the epigram in Heather Addison, ‘Capitalizing their charms: cinema stars and physical culture in the 1920s’, *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 50 (2002), p. 30.

45 Felando, ‘Clara Bow is It’, pp. 13–15.

46 Landay, ‘The flapper film’, p. 237.

47 For an account that takes this story at face value, see Rosen, *Popcorn Venus*, p. 85. Biographer David Stenn gives a more detailed account of this incident that suggests the man involved had his own publicity agenda, in Stenn, *Clara Bow: Runnin’ Wild*, pp. 65–68.

48 See for example Bow’s famous tell-all interview with Adela Rogers St Johns, described by Stenn in *ibid.*, pp. 119–22.

49 Studlar, ‘The perils of pleasure?’, p. 20; Felando, ‘Clara Bow is It’, pp. 18–19.

50 The expansiveness and cultural longevity of 'it' is suggested by the censorship history of *Sex Madness* (Cinema Service Corp, 1938), an exploitation film produced more than a decade after the release of *It*. The film was rejected by several state censors in the USA, but Ohio approved the film subject to certain cuts, including a scene in which 'one girl strokes another's arms in a suggestive manner' as she says 'You do have plenty of IT'. See the note to *Sex Madness* in American Film Institute, *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1931-1940*, Volume F.3 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 1898.

51 Studlar, 'The perils of pleasure?', p. 16.

52 The photograph appears in a clipping on p. 5 of the Clara Bow Scrapbook, Special Collections, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles. It is dated in a pencil annotation as January 1929, though *Get Your Man*, also directed by Arzner, was first released in 1927.

53 Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*, pp. 109–10.

included to establish that its gay-coded male character does not have 'it'. While Hollywood narratives attempted to shape the meaning of 'it' towards apparently benign heterosexual outcomes, the word's semantic openness and indeterminacy persisted in accruing other sexual possibilities.⁵⁰ Fan magazines were adept at exploiting this indeterminacy, confirming Gaylyn Studlar's critical insight that fan magazine discourse channelled women into nominally normative models of female subjectivity while at the same time 'attempt[ing] to satisfy sexually and socially transgressive aspects of women's desire'.⁵¹

This ambiguous positioning of female readers/spectators is evident in a 1927 image of Bow in which she holds a monocle up to her eye, with a supporting caption that reads: 'Clara Bow ... puts "It" in front of her eye, and laughs, just to show you she doesn't intend to keep "It" there. Only a part in "Get Your Man"'.⁵² Capitalizing on the understanding of Bow's mobile gaze, her image incites looking – just as it incites expectations of movement and eroticism – while she also looks out through her monocle at the unseen female reader/spectator. While we might now invariably associate the monocle with lesbian subcultural style, historically that was only one of its possible associations. As Laura Doan argues, even in the late 1920s the monocle carried multiple symbolic meanings, 'denoting class, Englishness, daring, decay, rebellion, affectation, eccentricity – and possibly, but not necessarily, sexual identity'.⁵³ Nevertheless, in this particular instance the monocle is directly associated with sexual appeal and desire, even as the caption ultimately redirects any possible implication of same-sex desire by and for Bow. Read allegorically, the transparent technology of the monocle stands in for the cinematic apparatus that structures and enables a new erotics of looking, even as the terms of those new erotics remain seemingly insubstantial and difficult to map. 'It'/sexuality becomes conflated with, and indivisible from, the invisible cinematic apparatus that enables looking and generates desire. A stand-in for the female spectator as both subject and object of the look, the monocled image of Bow suggests that her kinaesthetic 'look' (the combination of kinetic fashions, bodily performance and mobile gaze) was already primed to encompass the possibility of same-sex desire and lesbian identification.

It is precisely the openness of Bow's bodily and facial kineticism, already understood as highly sexual and eroticized, that Arzner harnesses across the narrative and spectacle of *The Wild Party*. Movement motivates Bow's character, and movement generates visual pleasure. Stella's accidental meeting with Gil on the train back to college is the outcome of her stumble in the railway carriage corridor and her accidental fall against his body. Her later rescue of Helen at the Medford College dance party is effected through movement: she spins the drunken Medford College boy across the dance floor so that the other girls can inflict 'the dizzy' on him. Bow's movements catalyze the other characters around her, who take up and repeat her moves in countless variations: the tap-dancing duo in the busy gym locker room; Babs's showgirl-like high kick for a dollar bill at

54 Mordaunt Hall, 'The screen',
New York Times, 2 April 1929.

55 For an earlier example of camera lens technology and film emulsion speed shaping acting styles, see David Mayer, 'Acting in silent film: which legacy of the theatre?', in Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer (eds), *Screen Acting* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 22–23.

56 The film's cinematography and editing suggest that it was shot with multiple cameras, a dominant studio shooting practice in the brief transitional sound era between 1929 and 1931. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 298–308. See also Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: an Introduction*, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2003), pp. 195–98.

the Medford College party; the darting young women in the hallways and corridors trying to avert Helen's scholarship disaster. All these scenes confirm the observation of the *New York Times* reviewer Mordaunt Hall that in *The Wild Party* everyone dashes 'hither and thither'.⁵⁴ The repertoire of movement, gesture and bodily comportment shared by the film's different female characters – a repertoire that inevitably revolves, with centrifugal force, around the figure of Bow – is exaggerated and eroticized by the film's multiplication of bodies. While this effect is literalized in the 'Costume' dance scene, with its repetition of Bow's body across the identical figures of her female companions, the film ramps up this effect across its other, more everyday, scenes. It repeatedly offers scenes of female bodies en masse, whether the back seat of the car, filled with tangled and initially anonymous bodies after the roadhouse brawl, or the fire drill towards the end of the film that provides another opportunity to squeeze umpteen barely-clad young moving bodies into the space of the Academy ratio frame. The comic effect of these scenes intensifies the homoeroticism of the image, while often only offering the flimsiest support to the heterosexual narrative. This is first apparent towards the end of the opening scene in which the young women in Stella's dormitory room surge towards the window to witness the arrival of Gil, the new professor of anthropology. The rush of bodies is part of the activation of the romance plot (since it again connects Stella to Gil), and their movement across the plane of the screen simultaneously expresses and secures the heterosexual orientation of their desires. But their bodies and the frilly details of nightgowns and undergarments visually overwhelm and outnumber the unsuspecting Gil. Just as they come to a stop to look down upon the new professor, the camera offers a tightly-framed image of the posed profiles of the women's bodies. Their erotic kineticism is only accentuated by their momentary pause. They become both the active subjects and objects of looking: diegetically at Gil; extradiegetically in their presentation for view by the film's spectators.

What registers as a slight awkwardness in the composition of shots in this scene, and in their spatial relationship to each other, is in part the result of new production conditions during the transitional sound era.⁵⁵ Earlier films starring Bow could more freely change camera positions (both as complex camera movements and new shot setups) and edit rapid montages in order to build complex kinetic sequences. During the making of *The Wild Party*, in scenes where synchronized sound was required, new technological constraints limited the degree to which cinematography and editing could enhance movement.⁵⁶ The advent of sound posed a problem for Bow in ways less related to the expected qualities of her voice than to her physical performance. One of the most significant changes was the new immobility of the camera and microphone when synchronized sound was required, a production environment that impacted on Bow since she had to deliver clearly enunciated lines from a rigid, static position. As is well-known, Arzner collaborated with the sound operator to design a sound boom, the very

first, to remove this impediment to Bow's way of working. This practical solution suggests that Arzner was acutely aware of the importance of Bow's kineticism to the success of her performance.

Despite the constraints of new sound technology, studios and directors worked hard to maintain the elements of classical Hollywood style. More than her behind-the-scenes intervention on Bow's behalf, it is Arzner's aesthetic solutions to the technological limitations of sound that suggest that she understood the importance of Bow's style to the broader feminine kinaesthetic configuration of *The Wild Party*. Attuned to the cultural imagery of the flapper, and the already established framework within which Bow's kinetic performances were read, one of Arzner's significant aesthetic solutions is to block the actors' actions as static poses in order to suggest their potential for movement. The counterintuitive impact of the transition to sound in *The Wild Party*, then, is that the mise-en-scene – and more specifically the arrangement of the body rather than the sound of the voice and its dialogue – becomes more privileged.⁵⁷ In Bow's initial entrance, for example, the arrangement of her body for the camera suggests the potential for movement. When Maisie helps Stella to open her suitcase, the two characters pose one behind the other in profile, Maisie visually repeating Stella's stance, positioned so that the soon-to-be opened suitcase will reveal its contents most fully to the audience. The angularity and visual rhythms of their posed limbs echo the opening credits image of dancing flappers, the bold diagonal lines of their bodies signifying movement. When the case finally opens they tumble over each other, an explosive shift from stasis to motion. The overall effect is to invest the pose, and stasis, with a kinetic potency so that it can also signify the potential for eroticized movement.

On one level the pose, whether as a pause in-between other movement or the physical stance of a character in a scene, could be seen as merely part of the dramatic exigencies of Hollywood narrative production. But in the context of the flapper genre, the pose assumes a more freighted relation to the feminine kinaesthetics that the genre both mediates and constitutes. The pose has a complex history. In terms of women as sexualized cinematic spectacle, the genealogy of the pose can be traced back to the tableau of older erotic theatrical representations or 'living pictures'. As a performance technique, a pose presents and displays the body in a certain arrangement of costume, posture and gesture in order to signify specific attitudes, emotions and ideas.⁵⁸ At the same time, the stillness of the body ensures that it is available to the spectator as erotic spectacle, able to be contemplated at leisure. By the 1920s the pose had assumed an important kinetic dimension, as seen earlier in relation to the example of women's fashions. It was part of a dialectic of stasis and motion in which the holding of a 'pose as if pausing' signified the possibility of past and future movement, a possibility that could also be read in sexual terms. The production exigencies of new sound technologies only exacerbate this effect, often requiring the actors to hold their bodies in too still a pose, for slightly too long, intensifying the

57 The response of distributors to censorship cuts of *The Wild Party* in the USA also suggests the privileging of the image. As Donald Crafton describes it, the Ohio censors ordered substantial cuts but 'the Paramount exchange resisted by substituting black leader for the censored picture track and letting the sound on disc continue'. See Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), p. 467.

58 On the motility of the gesture, in contradistinction to the pose or 'attitude', see Mayer, 'Acting in silent film', pp. 17–18.

anticipation of movement. One result is to bring attention to Bow's active looking: her not so subtle facial expressions and eye movements that are more noticeable given the stillness of her body, or other bodies on screen. But the duration and static nature of the poses of the other characters in *The Wild Party* also complement the already eroticized dynamics of motion, not only in terms of suspense as we wait for their next move, but because the slightest extension of the duration of their poses beyond the typical performance conventions of the period makes their poses more available to the audience's appraisal. Such photographic moments of stillness briefly arrest the narrative flow, and invite – indeed, incite – an eroticized reading of the looks, glances, touches and bodily presentations of and between the characters on screen.

It is within this rich and densely textured visual schema that the possibility arises of representing and decoding lesbian desire. Read in kinaesthetic and historical terms, the sexual intelligibility of scenes between Stella and Helen become more than a function of their friendship (the other major plotline of the film) or visual proximity in the frame. With the proliferation of all kinds of movement across the scenes of the film, movement that accumulates and saturates the image, all of its female characters come to be invested with the capacity for heightened sexual desire, even at moments of stasis – moments which might seem to be the antithesis of the film's and the flapper's kinaesthetic design. In signifying the potential for movement in those moments when bodies on screen are only minimally animated or 'live', the erotics of stasis reinforce the idea that sexual desire always emanates from bodies rather than being generated as a sexuality effect by the intertwined corporeal technologies of new physical and dance cultures and cinema. It is a scene between the two main female characters that occurs in a space of shared intimacy that provides perhaps the most poignant illustration of this effect. After the fire drill, Stella and Helen meet up again in their dorm room and Helen laments the loss of her incriminating love letters to her new boyfriend George, letters that reveal her transgression of strict college curfew rules. Towards the end of the scene, the characters perch on the edge of a recently vacated and rumpled bed. A site at the very least of an easy physical familiarity between two girls who have already spooned together in a railway car sleeping berth, the bed remains in the background for the entire scene. With a cut to a tighter mid-shot, the camera focuses our attention on their two poised and static bodies as Stella listens sympathetically to Helen's plight while looking intently at her, occasionally caressing her cheek. The erotic legibility of the scene, the possibility that it might represent lesbian desire on the Hollywood screen in 1929, is paradoxically articulated via the characters' stillness, and their mutual embodiment of a 'look of possible movement'. The brevity of the moment on screen not only testifies to its charged capacity for erotic meaning but ultimately works to secure it.

The bedroom scene (and other similar ones) points to Arzner's interest in creating a lesbian couple who become visually legible within the terms

of the film's overall aesthetic design. While it is possible also to read this scene as signifying an institutional homophobia, as establishing the representational boundary of a Hollywood cinema increasingly invested in relatively new heterosexual ideologies, when interpreted in terms of historical kinaesthetic femininities the scene offers no clear-cut sexual distinctions. Like other scenes in the film, the bedroom scene resists straightforward analysis in terms of sexual binaries that might neatly match onto either visual form or incipient narrative. This indeterminacy and potential for movement – between the characters, between different narrative trajectories – allows the bedroom scene to perform a double purpose, advancing the film's twinned heterosexual and homosocial plotlines, even as it also makes the scene available to homosexual interpretation. The scene's function as both sexual and narrative switchpoint evidences Arzner's recognition of the transformational possibilities of modern kinaesthetics that become available through the moving body of the cinematic flapper. In Arzner's capable hands, the variable momentum of new femininities can momentarily register same-sex desire at the same time as it confounds a system of sexuality predicated on fixing erotic preferences into hetero- or homosexual taxonomies. The 'look of possible movement' embodied by *über*-flapper Clara Bow and her cinematic cohort reflects the ephemerality of erotic experience even as it also plays a part in constituting the always in-process sexual subjectivities of its cinematic audiences.

The steady and regular mechanical rhythm of the train that begins the final sequence of *The Wild Party* contrasts markedly with the playful and random rhythms of the film's cast of characters. Subordinating individual bodily movements to movement in a larger spatial register, the ultimate scene relies on a vehicle symbolic of linearity and forward movement to shift the romance story characters away from the College and to guarantee its ending. For a film all about the body and its kinaesthetics, the relative spareness of the ending incites a reading back (even as the train drives relentlessly forward into the future), not only to those earlier visually rhythmic images but also to their generic context and the images of flappers that enabled them, complex discursive figures whose cultural currency, vibrancy and potential for feminine and sexual freedoms were shortly to be eclipsed by a new and less generous sexual culture. What so obviously engages Arzner in the film's material is a fascination with a mobile active femininity, and with the transformative potential of movement itself; movement that is unpredictable and non-linear, a moving back and forth, in which stasis magnifies the potential for change even as it also registers, for an evanescent moment, lesbian possibility. Throughout *The Wild Party* Arzner mobilizes the representational codes of Hollywood classical cinema, and draws on contemporary discourses of newly sexualized femininities, to frame the moving feminine body as central to Hollywood's complex dynamics of desire. If, as White has

59 Patricia White, 'Nazimova's veils: *Salome* at the intersection of film histories', in Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (eds), *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 66–67. In *Uninvited*, White undertakes a more extensive examination of the ways in which femininity veils same-sex desire in her elaboration of 'femme' films of the Production Code era. I have found her argument provocative for thinking through how *The Wild Party* may be part of the cinematic genealogy of those films.

convincingly claimed, the representation of female homosexuality in Hollywood film is more often veiled by 'the public sexualisation of the female body',⁵⁹ then in the case of *The Wild Party* it is the excessively kinetic female bodies that screen – by both projecting and hiding from view – lesbian desire as a new form of cinematic knowledge and pleasure. *The Wild Party*'s kinaesthetics, its dialectics of motion and stasis, structure its cinematic representations so that same-sex desire becomes possible and indeed integral to new modern female spectatorships, generating with it the possibility of new lesbian identifications and subjectivities, even as that desire is never definitively welded to any specific sexual identity or category. It is only by going through the motions, by tracing the kinaesthetics of new modern femininities, that we can understand how Hollywood cinema produces heterosexuality and lesbianism as intimately related sexual formations.

My thanks to Annamarie Jagose for her perceptive advice throughout the long gestation of this essay; and to the anonymous readers of *Screen* for their feedback and suggestions. Archival research for this article was made possible by a grant from the University of Auckland Faculty of Arts Doctoral Research Fund, and a Bright Future: Top Achiever Scholarship awarded by the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission.

The state against ghosts: a genealogy of China's film censorship policy

LAIKWAN PANG

There continue to be modern governments which take the idea of ghosts seriously enough to censor the films in which they appear. While horror and ghost films are often most popular in the kind of 'enlightened' societies which have supposedly long been disabused of any superstitious belief, it is not normally expected that the audiences who find these films so entertaining are themselves believers in the supernatural, or encounter such terror in their everyday lives. In contrast to discourses on violence and pornography, where a direct connection to society is often assumed, these genres do not provoke the same moral panic or recourse to censorship, as modernity is assumed to have cleansed any superstitious elements from society and recast any residue as entertainment. The idea of 'media effects' is not applied to ghost films, and there seems to be no basis for the censorship of ghosts; as far as I can tell, there have been no previous film censorship studies devoted to this area.

It could be argued that an anti-superstition film policy is idiosyncratically Chinese, in terms of its breadth, variation and relevance.¹ First because the ghost is a premodern folk concept that the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a modern socialist state claims to have eschewed; second because, in their association with alternative realms, ghosts are politically fraught. A ghost can be highly allegorical, and its representations might be encoded and decoded in ways over which the state has no control. Most importantly the Chinese love ghost stories, which have a long and rich cultural history in their country. Ghost films precipitate a variety of conflicting discourses in Chinese Communist Party

¹ Another country that still exercises strict censorship against ghosts is Vietnam. Article 30 of the Constitutions of Socialist Republic of Vietnam states: 'The State assumes the unified administration of cultural development. Reactionary and depraved ideologies and culture are to be banned; superstition is to be driven out.' The English version of the Constitutions is available at <[http://www.vietnamlaws.com/freelaws/Constitution92\(aa01\).pdf](http://www.vietnamlaws.com/freelaws/Constitution92(aa01).pdf)> accessed 19 September 2011. South Korea also censored superstition in the media, but abandoned that policy in 1998.

(CCP) governance, which has a strong belief in the direct impact of culture on politics and society.

In this essay I analyze the genealogy of censorship policies related to this genre. My aim is not to trace a linear development of policy discourse or to provide a blanket condemnation of film censorship. Instead, through the exploration of the plural and contradictory aspects of this censorship story, I shall show how China's socialist modernity is influenced by different historical forces, and investigate how the figure of the ghost might intervene vividly in this modern world. Ghosts have always been censored in this socialist country, which wholeheartedly practises materialism but whose policymaking is informed by many other political, moral and economic considerations. Related issues and policies provide a unique perspective from which to understand how cinema has been conceptualized by the Chinese state. Given the limited scope of this essay, I am not able to detail all of these cultural events and contexts; instead I highlight several historical moments at which the appearance and disappearance of ghost films has been directly related to the larger political and policymaking environment. I have two aims in providing a sketch of the genealogy of the Chinese government's fear of ghosts and cinema: first, to explore how this film censorship history of the PRC reflects a socialist governance and modernity quite different from that of many liberal democracies; second, to discuss how this unique history also shows that governments fear cinema in many different ways, and that the effects of media on society take forms beyond behaviour modeling or subject formation.² Emerging from this genealogy, my conclusion offers a reading of the structural tension between ideas of modern governance and cultural freedom.

Before entering into the history of the PRC, a brief account of related film policies in the Republican period (1911–49) will show what the CCP inherited and how it differed from its Guomindang (GMD) predecessor. Film censorship in China dates back to the late Qing period, when in May 1911 Shanghai's Self-Government Hall put forth 'Theatre Banning Regulations'.³ Of the seven regulations, only the one stating that 'there should be no licentious films' concerns censorship; the others – such as the separation of the male and female audiences, and moving closing times to midnight or earlier – relate to cinema management.⁴ We can no longer be sure how late Qing film censorship was actually carried out, but we know that people could watch all manner of films in Shanghai at the start of the Republican era, and that cinemas were increasingly viewed as plebeian and immoral places.⁵

Many popular films in the 1920s were adapted from martial arts novels. They were full of special effects such as flying heroes or heroines battling villains and ghosts, which fuelled the audiences' appetite and enthusiasm for the new media's spectacularity.⁶ But these subjects were not simply relics of the feudal past. Janus-faced modernity affected China's cultural scene in the 1920s and 1930s, giving rise to both the May Fourth Movement's iconoclastic scientism and, to a lesser extent, all manner of

- 2 For the relationship between film censorship and subject formation, see Theresa Cronin, 'Media effects and the subjectification of film regulation', *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 63 (2009), pp. 3–21; John Nichols, 'Countering censorship: Edgar Dale and the film appreciation movement', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2006), pp. 3–22.
- 3 Zhou Songqing, 'Difang zizhi yu Qingmo minchu de Shanghai ping'an chengshi jianshe' [Local self-government and Shanghai's urban development during the late-Qing and early-Republican periods], *Journal of Shanghai University of Political Science & Law*, no. 3 (2007), pp. 52–59.
- 4 The seven regulations can be found in Yang Yi (ed.), *Shanghai shi zizhi zhi* [Account of the self-governed city of Shanghai] (Shanghai: 1915), n.p.; reprinted (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1974), p. 19.
- 5 Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 181–83.
- 6 For an extensive discussion of these films, see Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 199–243.

- 7 Pang, *The Distorting Mirror*, pp. 184–208. By ‘spiritualism’ I do not refer to the particular religion of the Spiritualist Church; it is a general reference to the belief in the afterlife, the spirits of the dead, or the existence of supernatural forces beyond human control.
- 8 Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).
- 9 The earliest cinematic regulatory body in China was regional and advisory. The Jiangsu Provincial Education Association Film Censorship Committee was established in 1923. It gave the stamp of approval to films they deemed beneficial to society, and prompted related officials to take action on films harmful to social values and ethics. See Wang Chaoguang, ‘Jiancha, kongzhi yu daoxiang – Shanghai shi dainying jiancha weiyuanhui yanjiu’ [Inspection, control and direction: studies of Shanghai’s film censorship committee], *Modern Chinese History Studies*, no. 6 (2004), p. 95.
- 10 See Peng Baichuan, ‘Jiaoyubu dianjian xingzheng gaikuang’ [A general view of film inspection by the Department of Education], in *Zhongguo dianying nianjian 1934* [Chinese film yearbook 1934], photocopied edition (Beijing: China Radio and Television Publishing House, 2007), pp. 574–75. See also Zhiwei Xiao, ‘Constructing a new national culture: film censorship and the issues of Cantonese dialect, superstition, and sex in the Nanjing decade’, in Yingjin Zhang (ed.), *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 183–99.
- 11 Luo Gang, ‘Zhongyang dianjianhui gongzuo gaikuang’ [A general view of the Central Film Inspection Committee], in *Zhongguo dianying nianjian 1934*, p. 587.
- 12 ‘Jinyan guochan yingpian yilانبiao’ [A list of censored Chinese films], in *Zhongguo dianying nianjian 1934*, pp. 615–18. See also Wang Chaoguang, ‘Jiancha, kongzhi yu daoxiang’, p. 91.

magical and mystical thinking, thus introducing a tension between enlightenment and spiritualism.⁷ The May Fourth spirit was the GMD’s ruling ideology, but all kinds of supernatural activities were found in popular culture, their continuing ‘bad’ influence in turn used by the modern state to legitimize itself. According to Rebecca Nedostup, during a period of social reorganization and nascent state-building, the GMD strove to create a secular government stripped of rituals linking sovereignty to cosmic authority, but cultural and social activities based in superstition nevertheless abounded, showing that the secular and the sacred were not so easily separated.⁸ As such, superstitions – as the symbol of feudalism and the enemy of modernity – occupied an ambiguous and permanently troubling position in the modernizing project for both the GMD and later the CCP.

Film censorship policy demonstrates precisely this tension. In 1928 the Republican government established the Opera and Film Censorship Committee of the Party’s Propaganda Department in Shanghai. This first official film-censoring body was given clear instructions on procedure and criteria.⁹ The Film Inspection Law of November 1930 was the first national censorship law. It stated that four types of films could not be screened: those impugning the dignity of the Chinese race; those violating the ‘Three Principles of the People’; those injurious to people’s virtue and public order; and those spreading superstition.¹⁰ Censorship of ghost films was thus officially institutionalized, and subsequently, in February 1931, the Central Film Inspection Committee began to carry out film censorship nationwide. As stated in a 1934 report, the very first mission of the Film Inspection Committee was to abolish ‘earlier martial-arts films featuring ghosts and spirits’ in order to eliminate superstition and iniquitous thinking.¹¹ As it turned out, most of the censored films were not condemned for political reasons but for moral problems associated with representations of the supernatural or for the expression of superstitious thought.¹² The first wave of film censorship in China was directed specifically against superstition.

The face of film censorship changed radically in the mid 1930s, when moral principles were replaced by political expedience and censorship was implemented over such grave national concerns as China’s relationship with Japan and the GMD’s battle with the CCP. The actual regulations remained relatively constant during this turbulent period, but the intensity of GMD censorship was stepped up as the regime approached its demise. In 1948 the newspaper *Tiebao* reported that ‘In the period between October 1945 and September 1948, 162 Chinese films were inspected by the GMD; of these, forty-eight were edited. Many were cut beyond recognition.’¹³ Most of the films were censored for political reasons. In the meantime, horror films became a highly popular commercial genre. Horror films of the late 1940s have received little attention, largely because most of them are no longer available. Based on the limited information I have been able to obtain, many commercial films at that time featured ghosts and aspects of horror, including *Yuehai*

13 Tiebao, 18 October 1948; quoted in Qi Zhi, *Mao Zedong shidai de renming dianying (1949–1966)* [People's cinema during the Mao Zedong era, 1949–1966] (Taipei: Showwe Info, 2010), p. 13.

14 Li Hsiao-t'i, 'Making a name and a culture for the masses in modern China', *Positions*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2001), pp. 29–68.

15 See Zhu Shan, 'Tudi geming shiqi Jiangxi Suqu de fanmixin yundong' [Anti-superstition campaigns in Soviet Jiangxi during the land reform era], *Observation and Thinking*, no. 1 (2006), pp. 34–35.

fenggao/A Windy Night with No Moon (Cathay, 1947), *Guwu moying/Ghost Shadows in an Ancient House* (Cathay, 1948), *Yelai fengyusheng/The Sound of Wind and Rain at Night* (New Era, 1949), *Sharen ye/Killing Night* (New Era, 1949), *Senlin daxue an/A Bloody Crime in the Forest* (Central Enterprise Film Arts, 1949) and *Shisanhao xiongzhai/Haunted House No. 13* (Art China Film Arts, 1948). In 1928 film censorship was driven primarily by moral concerns, but by the end of the 1940s it was almost entirely political in nature. As a result, ghosts quickly returned to movie screens, replacing the relatively purist and socially committed cinema of the 1930s.

Both the GMD and its rival, the CCP, claimed to be the custodian of the May Fourth spirit, and both therefore denounced spiritualism. But in the wake of political crises, the GMD in the 1940s had to disregard its conceptual moral enemies and focus on its real political rival. By contrast, the CCP was much more committed to its anti-superstition endeavour. There were two wings of communist development during the Republican era: the scattered intellectuals based in urban centres and the actual communist administration settled in the rural hinterland. Among the former, the leftwing intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s were consistently committed to turning urban popular culture into an enlightenment project.¹⁴ This was fuelled both by Marxist atheism and the socialist belief in cultural propaganda – culture being a function of political mission, it must follow close on the heels of revolutionary thought. Most importantly, these intellectuals were heavily influenced by the May Fourth spirit, in which enlightenment was the main ideology. They chose socialism over liberalism, yet they were fiercely committed to educating the masses to become modern and useful national subjects.

The CCP's actual regime, on the other hand, found shelter in the Yan'an area. Besieged by the GMD, the CCP in 1935 was forced to move from its urban base to this remote and poor rural northern area where villagers had lived simply for thousands of years. In this newly established 'Soviet area' the CCP undertook land reform, but party members quickly realized that folk religions presented a major obstacle. People felt reluctant to engage in socialism because they already found solace in religion. To draw people to the ideology of class struggle, the early CCP made the fighting of superstitious beliefs one of its top political priorities.¹⁵ Coupled with mass education, opposition to superstition became a founding ideological principle and a source of legitimacy for the CCP, who could claim the moral high ground and simultaneously promote political activities.

Folk beliefs were so ingrained, however, that dismissing them altogether would be unwise for any new political regime seeking local people's endorsement and inviting their identification. Thus efforts were made to produce new cultural products that resonated with folk beliefs while propagating a new socialist world-view. One of the main functions of the newly established Lu Xun Academy of Arts in Yan'an was to incorporate regional folk customs into the new revolutionary culture.

Films were produced only sporadically because of the lack of equipment and film stock, and among other cultural products were newly adapted *yangge* (a form of ethnic dance) plays such as *Hongxie nüyaojing/The Female Spectre in Red Shoes*, which retained a folk sensibility but were purged of their superstitious elements.

After 1949, when the CCP defeated the GMD and gained sovereignty, the party leaders' practices and experiences during the Yan'an period significantly informed policymaking in the new nation. The new socialist regime continued to respect the rural population as its supporter and guardian. However, in order to realize its enlightenment promises, the new regime was committed to fighting superstition and to establishing a modern China free of 'religious contamination'. By censoring the supernatural across the board, the PRC was able to legitimize its role as the representative and embodiment of modernity, and rural culture no longer enjoyed the state's ideological protection.¹⁶ Cinema simultaneously benefited and suffered from state attention. The first film regulations in the PRC were the 1950 'Five Temporary Methods of Adminstrating the Film Industry Issued from the Ministry of Culture', which stated:

Whether it is domestic or imported, new or old, if elements of a film are found to oppose world peace and popular democracy against the interests of the Chinese people or to spread licentious, pornographic, superstitious or terrorist messages sufficient to disrupt order in the new society, such sections should be cut out, or the film could be banned and prevented from public screening.¹⁷

Again, superstition was lumped in with pornography as meriting censorship, deviating little from the GMD's censorship laws, at least on paper. However, the horror film genre, which was prominent in pre-1949 Shanghai cinema, completely disappeared after the Liberation, demonstrating the CCP's greater commitment to, and effectiveness at, censoring ghost stories. As Chris Berry notes, China's feature film industry of the period between 1949 and 1976 was highly stable, in that the same basic institutional and discursive paradigm held consistently and powerfully for almost thirty years.¹⁸ Its enlightenment ideology – that is, the commitment of the film industry to educating the populace into a modern and rational people – also remained unchanged. A large number of educational films were made, an elaborate nationwide network of rural exhibition units was set up, and the PRC was proud of its socialist film industry that privileged education over entertainment on its ideological scale.

The enlightenment project was directed not only at the viewers but also at the filmmakers. Another practice of film censorship came into being after 1949, one largely independent of the official censorship apparatus. Filmmakers in the new socialist country were invited, or coerced, to join in a national ideological apparatus, whose stance was supposed to be collectively shaped, particularly by filmmakers themselves. Because the system aimed to produce consensus, and cultural workers were

16 For historical accounts of the relationship between the PRC and religion, see Zhufeng Luo (ed.), *Religion under Socialism*, trans. Donald E. MacInnis and Zheng Xi'an (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991).

17 Collected in Office of Ministry of Culture (ed.), *Wenhua gongzuo wenjian ziliao huibian* [Collected documents on cultural works], Volume 1 (1949–59) (Beijing: Ministry of Culture, 1982), pp. 78, 81.

18 Chris Berry, *Postsocialist Cinema in Post-Mao China* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 27.

enlightened through active debate and intense self-reflection, this new 'censorship' body was no longer composed of officially appointed members and supported legally by related statutory regulations. It nevertheless encompassed the entire national propaganda system and could be directly engineered by top leaders. In addition, before films could be shot their scripts had to pass many levels of official and unofficial screening within the studios and related departments – a seamless system of weeding out all problematic elements. As one of the most prominent of these politically incorrect elements, the ghost soon disappeared from the cinema screen.

Interestingly there are still traces of the supernatural to be found in Chinese films made between 1949 and 1976, although none of these are horror films as we typically understand them. Instead they may be separated into two themes, anti-superstition films and opera films. In the first group, examples include: *Baimaonü/The White-Haired Girl* (Northeast, 1950), *Guishen buling/Neither Ghosts nor Gods Work* (Beijing, 1950), *Guiha/Ghost Talk* (Northeast, 1951), *Yiguan hairendao/The Harmful Yiguandao* (Beijing, 1952), *Gusha zhongsheng/The Bell Rings in an Old Temple* (Changchun, 1958), *Qianshao/Outpost* (Changchun, 1959) and *Moyatai* (Haiyan, 1960). These films feature figures rumoured to be ghosts, but these are eventually revealed to be either victims forced to go underground, as in *The White-Haired Girl*, or spies hiding to avoid arrest by the CCP, as in *The Bell Rings in an Old Temple*. In some cases the rumours are fabricated by corrupt spiritualists who lie to further their own interests, as in *Neither Ghosts nor Gods Work* and *The Harmful Yiguandao*. The films tread a thin line between the ghost story and the anti-ghost story. In their condemnation of spiritualism they chimed with the ideology of the CCP, but what usually attracted the audience was not the lessons learned by film's end but the depictions of the supernatural at the beginning, and thus the films could be deemed guilty of corrupting people's minds.¹⁹

The films mentioned above were made primarily in two periods, 1950 to 1952 and 1958 to 1960. Immediately after 1949, many private studios in Shanghai were allowed to continue operations and many also received government subsidies. Yuan Muzhi, director of the Central Film Bureau, believed that Shanghai filmmakers could not abruptly change their subject matter and values to cater to the new audiences, and it was essential to maintain a steady production rate (a projection of four hundred films per year); thus the new government supported the operation of existing private studios, provided that they in turn supported the new regime.²⁰ Between 1949 and 1951, sixty-one films, of diverse themes and genres, made by private studios were allowed to be screened. Many were comedies and quite a few were period films; most involved romantic love stories and the depiction of bourgeois lives.²¹ Although more than four hundred proposals, eighty finished films and forty scripts were banned by the Film Guidance Committee between 1951 and 1952,²² film censorship was exercised without clear policy principles, the only explicitly stated aim

19 An interesting exception was *Moyatai*, a minority film that was given a bit more leeway to represent spiritualist elements.

20 Zhong Dafeng, 'Yuan Muzhi tongzhi yu xin Zhongguo dianying shiye de chuchuang shexiang yu shishi' [Comrade Yuan Muzhi and the establishment and implementation of film enterprises in the new China], *Contemporary Cinema*, no. 5 (1999), pp. 32–38.

21 For a list of these films, see the appendix to Qian Chunlian, *Xin Zhongguo chuqi siying dianying yanjiu* [Studies of early private cinema in the new China] (MPhil thesis, China Film Art Research Center, 2001). See also Qi, *Mao Zedong shidai de renming dianying*, pp. 96–98.

22 Qi, *Mao Zedong shidai de renming dianying*, pp. 163–64.

23 Hollywood films disappeared from the market completely in 1950, whereas fifty-two Soviet films were released in China that year. See Hong Hong, 'Lun "shiqinian" Zhong-Su dianying guanxi' [On the Sino-Soviet film relationship during the 'seventeen year period'], *Film Arts*, no. 3 (2006), p. 36.

being to eradicate all Hollywood films.²³ As a result, for the most part Shanghai commercial film culture of the 1940s sailed through the Revolution and did not come to a halt until 1952. Quasi-horror films were still produced, although couched in anti-superstition ideological rhetoric.

Another important historical threshold for the reappearance of ghost films was between 1958 and 1960, during the Great Leap Forward. For example, *The Bell Rings in an Old Temple*, directed by Zhu Wenshun, told the story of a group of traitor spies hiding in an old temple to attack CCP facilities during the Sino-Japanese War. Basically a detective film – a genre very popular at that time – the old temple was treated as an occult site, and the filmmakers employed classic horror film techniques to allude to a supernatural existence in the temple and to create a sense of trepidation. *Outpost*, directed by Mongolian filmmaker Erji Guangbudao, was also an anti-spy story in which a CCP officer pretends to be the dead 'Spy 41', although the main source of horror comes not from this impersonation but from the overall sense of eeriness that the director creates and manipulates. Under the rubric of the spy genre the film is able to employ elements of suspense, including music, lighting and characterization, to exhilarating effect.

Both these films were produced by the Changchun Studio, a productive socialist film factory churning out a steady flow of genre films each year. The two films were products of the Great Leap Forward, when film studios were required to double or triple their annual production. The officially promoted genre was that of 'documentary arts films' – dramatic films that were based on social reality and celebrated the success of communist production – but other genres were also made in order to meet production requirements. Interestingly, Maoist film censorship was most relaxed not during the Hundred Flowers period (1956–57), considered to be a brief cultural renaissance in socialist China, but during the Great Leap Forward, a push for growth in all sectors, including cinema. The Great Leap Forward was invested with a strong political mandate to uproot the regressive elements that threatened China's communist project, and it also influenced film circles with its ideological control. But this was also a time of cinematic plurality, due in part to the support of Zhou Enlai²⁴ and in part to the production quotas imposed on the film studios. In 1958 the Film Bureau demanded that the studios double their 1957 levels of production,²⁵ and 213 feature-length films were made between 1958 and 1959.²⁶ Increased production meant that script supervision was not exercised as thoroughly as before, so audiences were able to watch a more diverse range of films, countering the original political intention of the Great Leap Forward.

The second group of 'spiritualist films' that appeared throughout the seventeen years from 1949 to 1966 treated traditional operatic subjects. Examples include *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai/Butterfly Lovers* (Shanghai, 1954), *Doueyuan/Snow in Summer* (Changchun, 1959), *Baoliandeng/The Magic Lotus Lantern* (Tianma, 1959), *Erdumei/The Second Bloom* (Wuhan, 1959), *Huanhunji/Back to Life* (Changchun,

24 Zhou Enlai, 'Wen yi gongzuo yeyao liangtiao tui zoulu' [Culture and art also must walk on two legs], 3 May 1959. Reprinted in Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi [CCP Central Archive Research Centre] (ed.), *Zhou Enlai wexuani* [Selected writings by Zhou Enlai], Volume 7 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), pp. 182–87.

25 Meng Liye, *Xin Zhongguo dianying yishu shigao 1949–1959* [History of film arts in the new China, 1949–59] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2002), p. 285.

26 Ibid., pp. 280–81.

1960), *Youyuan jingmeng/Interrupted Dream* (Beijing, 1960) and *Liu Yi Chuanshu/The Princess's Messenger* (Changchun, 1962). These films were renditions of traditional Chinese operas and were tolerated largely because the government allowed the original operas to be performed publicly.

In contrast to the censorship of film, in the theatre ghosts were viewed relatively benignly. Mao approved of ghost plays, and used the term 'cow ghosts and snake gods' to describe these works.²⁷ In a 1957 talk, Mao claimed:

There are many cow ghosts and snake gods in society, and it's not surprising that they also appear in scripts. Not all Chinese people believe in ghosts, and there is nothing to fear about such performances. Many young people do not know what cow ghosts and snake gods are, so they should watch some of these pieces for educational purposes.²⁸

In spite of his lifelong opposition to superstition, during the Hundred Flowers period he had stated that people were wise enough to tell toxins from nutrients. On 17 May 1957, two months after this talk, the Ministry of Culture announced that all previous bans on traditional plays were lifted and that 'superstitious' works could be performed nationwide. This, it was claimed, was because the political consciousness of the people had been raised and performers were far more educated than before.²⁹ Although previously ghosts had managed sporadically to sneak into local theatre, in 1957 ghost plays were often performed as high-profile productions and became vastly popular. These works attracted their share of criticism, but it was generally not of the genre as a whole but of specific works' overemphasis on sensation and violence in their depiction of hell, reflecting the vigorous and rich theatre culture of that time.³⁰ Even during the rough Anti-Rightist Movement (1957–59), the performance of ghost plays continued. The Ministry of Culture banned them again in 1963,³¹ however, mainly due to national criticism of the ghost story *Li Huiniang*.³²

The ghost continued to be a rich cultural symbol in many spheres throughout the Maoist era, despite the strict control exercised over cinema. The existence of the spiritualist opera films did not indicate that the government was more permissive of period films; it was the opera form itself that enjoyed this relatively lenient policy. While traditional opera and film were equally subject to political scrutiny during the period, the CCP respected the former as a more pluralistic form of cultural representation. Many Party leaders – including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai – were themselves opera fans, and they had individual preferences for different kinds of regional opera. Traditional regional opera, at least before the Cultural Revolution, was considered to be not only a propaganda form but also part of folk art and culture, evoking the memory of Yan'an and the CCP's overall affiliation with rural culture.

Cinema, however, had become a more immediate political tool, due largely to the government's belief in its power. Like the Soviet Union, the PRC saw cinema as the most important cultural form, thanks not only to

- 27 Mao Zedong, 'Zai shengshi zizhi qu dangwei shuji huiyi shang de jianghua' [Talks during the meeting with party secretaries of provinces, cities, and autonomous regions], January 1957, collected in *Mao Zedong xuanji* [Selected writings of Mao Zedong], Volume 5 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1977), p. 349.
- 28 Mao Zedong, 'Tong weiyijie daibiao de tanhua' [Discussion with representatives of cultural fields], 8 March 1957; reprinted in *Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi* [CCP Central Archive Research Centre] (ed.), *Mao Zedong wenji* [Mao Zedong literary collection], Volume 7 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), pp. 257–58.
- 29 'Wenhua bu fachu tongling jinyan jumu yiliu kaifang' [The Ministry of Culture's announcement to allow all banned plays to be performed again], 17 May 1957; in *Juben* [Drama Monthly], no. 6 (1957), p. 63.
- 30 Many of these criticisms can be found in 1957 issues of *Zhongguo xiju* [Chinese Theatre].
- 31 Ministry of Culture, 'Guanyu tingyan "guixi" de qingshi baogao' [Requesting the suspension of the performances of 'ghost plays'], 29 March 1963, *Xinhua News*, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2005-01/28/content_2519064.htm> accessed 20 September 2011.
- 32 Liang Bihui, "'Yougui wuhai" lun' [On 'There are ghosts but there is no harm'], *Wenhui bao*, 6–7 May 1963.

its large audience base but to the immense number of personnel and the technological and organizational investment it required. The institutional nature of cinema invited and facilitated institutional control. Unlike the numerous regional theatrical troupes operating throughout China, and the even more numerous individuals who produced their own art and literature, all film studios were nationalized after 1952. Both film production and film distribution were monopolized by the state. The China Film Distribution Company, established in January 1951, was responsible for the entire national film distribution and was under the direct control of the Ministry of Culture. This company was tasked primarily with controlling the import of films, but it soon started to operate as an effective censorship gateway, and drastically limited what people could watch onscreen. By contrast, complete central control of the theatre was inconceivable and never really occurred, even during the height of the Cultural Revolution. Cinema was not only politically useful, it was also easier to control.

After decades of heavy political agitation and protection, in the 1980s art was more or less left to its own devices, at which point all kinds of new explorations and experimentations sprang up. At the same time a consumer culture emerged that started to shape popular culture, which became increasingly conceptualized in terms of leisure rather than propaganda. Instead of using art to support official ideology, the postsocialist government's role was to depoliticize art and to facilitate the transformation of culture into entertainment and consumption. Throughout the 1990s a new discourse of cultural policy binding culture to the economy spread quickly worldwide, and the current PRC government has been keen to adopt related ideas of using the creative industries as an engine to generate profit. Recent developments in China's film policy show the change in economic direction, in that the state is committed to nurturing a national film industry able to compete with Hollywood – an interesting contrast to the PRC film policy of the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Hollywood films were simply eschewed in favour of a new national cinema. Nowadays, Hollywood films are welcome in China in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) stipulations, and a new Chinese cinema squares up to Hollywood in a relatively free market.³³ But this does not mean political concerns no longer exist. The state continues to exercise a direct centralized control on film, preventing any seeds of political destabilization from sprouting while maintaining a puritanical culture that minimizes the depiction of such 'debauched' cultural phenomena as pornography, violence and corruption.

In postsocialist China, an elaborate censorship system continues to operate. The major censorship body is the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT). Censorship of film occurs in two stages, preshooting approval and prescreening approval, and is monitored by the Central Office and/or the Provincial Offices of SARFT and its Film Censorship Committee. If a film deals with special topics such as diplomacy, ethnicity, religion, military, state security, legislature or

33 There is still a quota system for imported films in China, but it has been gradually relaxed to meet WTO standards.

34 For details, see 'Guojia guanbo dianying dianshi zongju ling: di wushier hao' [The fifty-second directive of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television], 22 May 2006, The State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, <<http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2006/05/28/20070918143215920857.html>> accessed 20 September 2011.

35 In 1992, the National People's Congress released 'Zhonggong zhongyan guanyu jianqiang shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe ruogan zhongyao wenti de jueyi' [The PRC's resolution to strengthen socialist spiritual civilization], asserting spiritual civilization in society is a national priority. CPC News, <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64567/index.html>> accessed 20 September 2011.

36 See Zhihong Gao, 'Serving a stir-fry of market, culture and politics: on globalisation and film policy in greater China', *Policy Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2009), pp. 423–38.

historical celebrity, additional approval must be granted by the relevant government offices.³⁴ Other administrative units that have the power to investigate cultural contents (and purge ghosts) include the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), the Central Propaganda Department, the Ministry of Information Industry, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security and the General Administration of Customs. These departments all have the power to intervene in film production and distribution when they find anything that causes them concern.

Policies governing the representation of ghosts continue to sway between the principles of depoliticization, anti-superstition and pro-marketization. In 1979 Ye Jianying, then chairman of the National People's Congress, promulgated the notion of 'Socialist Spiritual Civilization'. Deng Xiaoping followed this by stipulating that spiritual civilization refers to education, science, culture and communism, and that the role of the PRC government is to cultivate socialist citizens with ideals, ethics, culture and discipline. 'Spiritual civilization' became a national priority and, in fact, an ideological pillar in the Open Door period, balancing the philistinism and greed promoted by marketization.³⁵ Interestingly, if the ban on superstition was a Marxist legacy in Maoist China, contemporary prohibition is largely a reaction to the adoption of capitalism. Precisely because of the CCP's capitalist turn, the government needs to legitimize its continued governance in moral terms, making the PRC one of the few countries that still exercises strict censorship over ghost stories. Contrary to the assumption that current film policy in China merely pays lip service to the cultural imperative of local film and instead focuses on cinema's economic rewards,³⁶ anti-superstition is still a prominent film policy and the state has not stopped using cinema as a propaganda tool.

Once again there is evidence of varying levels of government laxity towards different media. As in the Maoist period, traditional representations of ghosts are allowed within contemporary theatre while cinema continues to be cleansed of all signs of superstition, so the Chinese people are still not able to watch ghost stories on the big screen (apart from exceptional cases such as *Painted Skin*, discussed below). At the same time, ghosts are generally allowed on television as long as they are characters from traditional stories or the mysteries are ultimately revealed to result from human machinations. Contemporary Chinese publications are also saturated with ghost stories. Japanese and other imported horror fiction is a consistent bestseller, and popular Chinese writers such as Zhou Dedong churn out horror stories galore.

Youth culture is another fraught territory where superstition is strictly prohibited in the name of protecting the innocent. Censorship is consequently at its most rigid, or most unstable, at the points where cinema and youth culture overlap. Referring specifically to the hugely popular Japanese manga *Desu Nōto/Death Note* (2006; *Siwang biji* in Chinese) and its filmic adaptations in China, in May 2007 GAPP

announced the ‘Notice of investigating and prohibiting horror literatures and publications like *Death Note*’ (hereafter 2007 Notice). As its name suggests, this policy is directed at a single title, *Death Note*, which tells the story of how the notebook of the God of Death is obtained by a high-school student who later discovers that whoever has their name written on the notebook will die. The student then uses the notebook to execute a large-scale ‘cleansing of evil’. In China, ordinary notebooks presenting themselves as ‘death notebooks’ suddenly became hot items, and students wrote in them the names of people they hated and wished to die. This profoundly shocked much of the older generation, and the 2007 Notice can be seen as the specific official response to this phenomenon.³⁷

In February 2008, GAPP announced another ‘Notice of investigating and prohibiting audiovisual materials of “horror and spiritualist genres”’ (hereafter 2008 Notice), which was followed by a large-scale confiscation of all such materials. According to GAPP, ‘horror and spiritualist genres’ refer to all audiovisual materials featuring characters modelled after ghosts, aliens and other non-human forms; plots fabricated by supra-experiential imagination; strange dream works; scary and ghastly illusions and works aiming to terrify and excite audiences.³⁸ This rather broad description covers much of traditional and contemporary popular culture, ranging from *Star Wars* to *Harry Potter*, to classic Chinese novels such as *Journey to the West* and to many cultural products for children of all times and cultures. The notice targeted both officially sanctioned and illicit materials. All local branches of GAPP were instructed to reexamine materials that had been approved for publication in the preceding two years, but the ban was also directed at pirated materials. It should be remembered that *Death Note* and most other Japanese manga currently circulating in China are pirated but had been tolerated by the authorities. The 2008 Notice allowed for a selective raiding of the plethora of pirated material in circulation, further obfuscating the regime of legality in contemporary China.

The two policies are generally considered as a set, proceeding from the censorship of one specific title to an overall cultural category, with an eye to eradicating horrific and supernatural material that might harm young minds – a way for China to legitimize itself as a modern nation nurturing no superstitious beliefs. However, the two policies are actually the consequence of two independent events, connected ultimately to the underlying political anxiety of the PRC government. The 2007 Notice aims to curb the popularity of a craze that not only reveals but literally documents young people’s hatred of society (the names written on these death notebooks were often authority figures such as teachers). These youths resort to the God of Death to express their disgust and to relieve pressure. Their imaginations may have been beyond society’s reach, but the actual recording of homicidal wishes made the general public nervous – aware as it was of how the one-child family policy can put too much pressure on children. The phenomenon also alerted the Chinese government to the threat to its ideology of ‘stability’ from the younger generation.

37 Zhang Chongyang and Ye Feng, ‘Xiaoyuan li de “heise xuanxie”’: *Shiwang biji* ruqin xiaoyuan’ [‘Black divulgence’ on campus: *Death Note* invading campuses], 7 June 2007, Xinhua News, <news.xinhuanet.com/school/2007-06/07/content_6210695.htm> accessed 2 May 2009.

38 ‘Xinwen chubao zongchu fa “tongzhi”’ [GAPP issues ‘notice’], 15 February 2008, Xinhua News, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2008-02/15/content_7608981.htm> accessed 20 September 2011.

The 2008 Notice, however, was one of a number of policies intended to 'sanitize' the country's cultural sphere in advance of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Presenting a successful Olympics to the world was of the utmost importance to the PRC, in order to encourage national unification and to promote a positive international image. To facilitate this, all kinds of freedoms that might lead to instability were curtailed. In this instance, what was feared by the government were not supernatural forces as such but popular culture in general. During the opening of the Beijing Olympics, one officially sanctioned activity was the new 'youth' version of the traditional *kunqu* performance *Peony Pavilion* at Beijing's Mei Lanfang Grand Theatre. *Peony Pavilion* is one of the most famous ghost stories in Chinese theatre, depicting the resurrection of the female character Du Niniang. This new piece, put together by the famous Taiwanese writer Pai Hsien-yung, received the utmost support from the Chinese government, who found it an acquiescent gesture to the canonization of *kunqu* as a national traditional art, currently a prominent cultural policy. But other ghost and horror stories, particularly those with contemporary settings, were destined to be purged. The 2008 Notice is not a reaction to a specific cultural phenomenon, as the 2007 Notice was, but is part of a larger ambition to tame popular culture.

The two notices are a reflection of just how popular such cultural materials are in China. Although ghosts are generally disallowed in cinema, the viewing of pirated versions, online or on DVD, of all kinds of horror film are widespread. As before, some films present themselves as horror films, such as *Men/Door* (Li Shaohong, 2007) and *Xinzhong you gui/Matrimony* (Teng Huatao, 2007), but the main characters are almost always revealed as psychopaths, or else there is a story within a story and all the horrific elements are shown to be either delusions or fictitious. An interesting exception is the Hong Kong–PRC coproduction *Huapi/Painted Skin* (Gordon Chan), which received shooting approval and finished production in 2007 but was repeatedly denied screening approval until the close of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The film ended up netting more than 200 million RMB at the domestic box office.

Painted Skin is adapted from a classical *Liaozhai* tale and tells the story of a fox spirit, Xiao Wei, who wears the skin of a beautiful woman and eats the hearts of her admirers in order to maintain her human form. She falls in love with General Wang, who has saved her life, and plots to kill his wife Peirong in order to take her place, but ends up disillusioned and decides to renounce her human form when she discovers that Wang loves Peirong more than her. Other *Liaozhai* adaptations have appeared on the Chinese screen, such as *Gumu huangzhai/An Old Grave and a Deserted Studio* (Xie Tieli, 1991) and *Hu Yuan/The Predestined Fate with a Fox* (Sun Yuanxun, 1986), but they all claim to be adaptations of literary classics and downplay ghostly elements as much as possible. *Painted Skin*, however, markets its horror scenes as a selling point, and its high box-office revenue stems partly from people's curiosity about this genre.

39 A most exemplary case in this regard is the film *Hero*, whose nationalist messages and global impact are elaborately discussed in Gary D. Rawnsley and Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley (eds), *Global Chinese Cinema: the Culture and Politics of Hero* (London: Routledge, 2010).

40 For further discussions on this topic, see Laikwan Pang, 'Post-socialism and cultural policy: China's depoliticization of culture in the late 1970s and early 1980s', in Nissim Otmazgin (ed.), *Popular Culture and the State in East and Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2011).

But what is most interesting about this film is its marketing emphasis on the two female protagonists, which immediately sets it apart from other big-budget contemporary Chinese coproductions. These have almost always, at least until 2008, been male-centred action or war films, with strong hints of political allegory emphasizing nationalist sentiment.³⁹ Not only are the two female performers (Zhou Xun and Zhao Wei) the stars of the film, but the male protagonist (Chen Kun) is deliberately depicted as soft and feminine, in spite of being a general. This is particularly obvious in a dream sequence in which we find General Wang, with feminine makeup, loose hair and silky outfit, making love with Xiao Wei. The audience cannot easily define the gender of the two characters, implying an androgynous encounter. As a female genre in the Chinese context, the ghost film seduces filmmakers and audience away from political readings to focus on sensation and emotion, which indirectly reveals the problem of contemporary Chinese cinema: with related policies putting so much emphasis on depoliticization, it is itself politicized through and through, as is most spectacularly observed in the huge popular discourse around the 2010 blockbuster *Let the Bullets Fly* (Jiang Wen). In spite of its success, *Painted Skin* remains an exception – there have been no followup attempts until now, and depoliticization remains an unfinished project in contemporary Chinese cultural governance.⁴⁰

Two main issues related to PRC governance can be identified in this censorship story: the socialist regime's commitment to cultural control, and its self-legitimization through enlightenment discourse. In this history we find mutual support between the two projects, but conflicts also abound. The control of the representation of ghosts, which is both premodern and modern, precipitates the difficulties of modern statecraft and cultural governance, and also indirectly reveals the dialectics of enlightenment, in which reason and unreason exist side by side in modernity.

Let us first examine the implications of cultural control. Governance is often negatively correlated to culture in the PRC, which does not view culture as an independent realm to be protected from economic and political interests. The two main arguments against film censorship – that film is either a form that should be given artistic autonomy or a commercial endeavour that should be governed only by the market – have not gained currency in the PRC. Culture in general, and film in particular, has always been broadly understood as a powerful tool for reflecting and manipulating people's thoughts and values, and the state has always assumed the role of cinema's guardian.

Behind the country's wavering anti-superstition policy we find a tug-of-war between culture and politics. On the one hand, because the Chinese have never been monotheists and practise all kinds of spiritual and ancestral worship, ghosts have always been a part of China's cultural history, not only in actual rituals but in the arts, literature and theatre. Classical Chinese fictions of the 'strange and supernatural' school, which originated from myths, fables, parables and folk legends, took shape around the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), and performance

pieces related to ghosts can be traced much further back in history. Enriched by Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian ideas, ghosts become instruments of political satire, vehicles for wild imaginations, channels for escapism, allegories of sexual freedom or simply exalted literary or artistic expressions in their own right. Related genres continued to be highly popular throughout China's history. On the other hand, representations of spiritualism – as the CCP knows very well – are politically dangerous in many ways, from promoting religious and minority fractionalism to becoming the means for 'foreign powers' to intervene in China's internal affairs. The Falun Gong spiritual movement is a case in point, and further reinforced government determination to control all manner of otherworldly thoughts and practices.⁴¹ Thus, although Article 36 of the PRC's Constitution clearly states the rights of citizens to enjoy freedom of religion, it also stipulates that 'no one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, and religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination'.⁴² Religion is feared not because China is an atheist nation but because people might be manipulated and mobilized by religious thinking, or because dissidents might use religion to justify 'counter-revolutionary' acts.

In the tug-of-war between politics and culture, the Chinese government has never been totally able to control its popular culture.⁴³ Contemporary Chinese cinema does not present ghosts, but people's fascination with them can easily be fulfilled by imports – as evidenced by the wild popularity of the Japanese *Death Note* and similar material circulated online or in pirated form. Asian horror films in general are now very popular in China. The 1998 Japanese film *Ringu/Ring* (Hideo Nakata), which gave rise to the global J-horror trend, was followed by the success of K-horror (Korean horror), as well as other horror films produced in Taiwan, Singapore, the Philippines and elsewhere. These films are mostly products of their genre, but some also contain political messages. Horror films in Singapore, for example, are seen as representing the dysfunction of the capitalist qua authoritarian society, and the social-structural violence of Singapore is said to intertwine with specific supernatural figures in its horror films.⁴⁴ Thus the now popular category of Asian horror provides a rich set of cultural texts. In contrast, the Hong Kong film industry which was once famous for churning out hundreds of formulaic horror films has almost completely died out – precisely because of the industry's fraught efforts to adapt to the Chinese market and its policy environment.

The banning of supernatural and horror content in certain media implies an outright condemnation of national cultural industries and a war on global popular culture in general.⁴⁵ The government has keenly supported the videogame, comics and other media industries, but content control remains a major impediment to the development of any entertainment business. The real issue at stake is not, as many mainland Chinese scholars have asserted, the balance between political control and economic development, but an insecure state that takes culture too seriously, and its wavering cultural policies that cover too many concerns. Considering the

⁴¹ See Utiraruto Otehode, 'The creation and reemergence of qigong in China', in Yoshiko Ashiwa and David Wank (eds), *Making Religion, Making the State: the Politics of Religion in Modern China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 241–66.

⁴² For an evaluation of the relationship between the state and religions in contemporary China, see Fuk-Tsang Ying, 'New wine in old wineskins: an appraisal of religious legislation in China and the regulations on religious affairs of 2005', *Religion, State & Society*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2006), pp. 347–73.

⁴³ Carol Clover demonstrates that the horror genre is enjoyable partly because it reflects how gender and audience identification constantly flow and mutate. The audience sees through the killer's eyes and initially cheers him on in his dastardly deeds, then screams for the victim and ultimately applauds the girl's final heroics. Carol Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁴⁴ Kenneth Paul Tan, 'Violence, the supernatural, and exoticism in Singapore cinema', in Chua Beng-Huat (ed.), *Asian Cinema and Violence* (forthcoming).

⁴⁵ The term 'wenhua chanye' first appeared in official PRC policy in 2001, in Premier Zhu Rongji's 'Guanyu guomin jingji he shehui fazhan dishige wunian jihu gangyao de baogao' [Summary Report on the tenth five-year plan for national economic and social development]. But the marketization of culture has been a principle of PRC's cultural policy since the beginning of the 1990s.

current infiltration of the supernatural imagination in global popular culture, it is economically unwise and culturally impossible to eradicate these representations unless the state reverts to the closed-door policy practised before 1979. Regarding ghostly representations, the line separating entertainment and politics is blurred, yet the state continues to dream of an impossible happy marriage between vital cultural industries and political control.

As this story of censorship shows, cultural control is often in direct conflict with the emancipation that cultural expression might engender, and people's fondness for ghosts indirectly jeopardizes political stability. The Chinese government is consistently anxious about ghosts, but the actual elements they have feared have varied over time. In the beginning the new regime had to show respect for folklore and cultural traditions in order to gain people's trust. Sometimes Party leaders' own love of certain art forms allowed for a conditional representation of ghosts. At other times ghosts sneaked into films when an official urge to build a thriving national cinema overrode moral concerns – as in the early 1950s, during the Great Leap Forward, and currently as China comes to terms with Hollywood. Horror film as a popular genre is instrumental in the appeal of any national film industry to its audience. Policies have oscillated between repressing and allowing the representation of ghosts at different times and in different media, for a variety of political reasons and social effects. As James C. Robertson proclaims, 'censorship for adults is, in whatever guise, always at rock bottom a device to perpetuate the political and social status quo'.⁴⁶

The second thread to my argument has concerned the PRC's custodianship of the enlightenment ideal, which seems to support this dichotomy between politics and culture. I argued earlier that since the Yan'an period the CCP has allowed political considerations to contaminate its enlightenment principles. But we can also understand it differently, in the sense that the political deliberations work precisely to support enlightenment logic, and the enlightenment components in the PRC's official ideology remain sternly unchanged throughout the turbulent century. However, on closer inspection of the logic of the enlightenment and this censorship story, we find an uneasy conflict between them, because what is repressed is both freedom and unreason, the relationships between which are fraught. Put another way, since the cinematic ghost is the embodiment of both cultural freedom and premodern irrationality, it is both a realization and a refutation of the enlightenment.

I shall further explain the anti-enlightenment dimension of this censorship story by turning briefly to Kant. Simply speaking, we might characterize the Kantian enlightenment project as resting upon three pillars: reason, freedom and morality. The assumed transcendental nature of 'reason' allows the enlightenment to be a transparent, universal and coherent secular project; 'freedom' releases the human beings from coercive control from institutions; 'morality' keeps people's selfishness at bay. Freedom must be controlled by rationality and morality, and the three necessarily inform and coexist with each other. If we exercise our freedom

⁴⁶ James C. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action, 1913–1975* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 168.

47 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London/ New York, NY: Macmillan/St Martin's Press, 1958), p. 465.

48 Immanuel Kant, 'An answer to the question: what is enlightenment?' (1784), in *Perceptual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), p. 42.

49 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

with reason we will be unavoidably bound by moral laws – this is what Kant means by practical freedom.⁴⁷ But such an ideal scenario is not easily applied to this censorship story, as the PRC holds on to reason and morality by curbing people's freedom. Along with its commitment to enlightenment, the PRC's suppression of superstition seems to have strong ideological implication and justification. But this enlightenment project, which is both an ideological commitment to the employment of reason and a political tool for the regime's control of human freedom, runs into direct conflict with that described by Kant, who dichotomizes enlightenment and authoritarian government, arguing that the employment of reason allows the individual subject to be freed from the regime's control.⁴⁸ Because the PRC's repression of ghosts is not only an ideological doctrine for reason but also a political strategy for dominance, this combination directly challenges Kant's original theory. In fact no modern state can comfortably resolve this paradox, and the enlightenment project is never able to respond satisfactorily to the operation of the state, whose institutional control of individual subjects always has coercive dimensions. But the PRC's high-profile battle against ghosts just exaggerates this impasse.

Most revealing in this case study is the resistance of ghosts to the enlightenment project, and the fact that the state alternates between submission and repression. We cannot simply occupy a position of condemning the state, which is sometimes just a reflection of people's collective anxiety. We find a circular mechanism in which a new secular world arose seemingly out of the inability of the sacred to explain the world, but all kinds of myths, old and new, continue to challenge or accompany the rational world, making many modern subjects fearful all over again. As such, enlightenment becomes a machine which incessantly produces and represses myths. In fact, enlightenment's emphasis on freedom often becomes the source of the unrest, instability and insecurity that characterize modernity, and the coercive dimension of the state is not entirely unwanted by most modern people: the ideological cleansing exercised at the turn of the socialist era in the early 1950s was largely welcomed by the people, and it was fearful Chinese parents who asked for the censorship of *Death Note* half a century later. As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno have reminded us, by separating reason from myth, the enlightenment prevents modern people from engaging fully with social and intellectual life.⁴⁹ But at the same time, modern people also actively seek ideological protection from a modernity that is always unsure of itself. The PRC continues to commit to enlightenment ideals – reason, freedom and morality – so that the state can legitimize its rule in the move from socialist to postsocialist periods. As I have shown, however, this seemingly straightforward truth-claim is complex, unstable and utilitarian, reflecting the character of governance of not only a socialist country but that of all modern states.

The author would like to acknowledge the grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region, China (CUHK449508) to support the work described in this paper.

Laura Dern's eternal return

JENNIFER PRANOLO

David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006) spectacularly features a death that is not one: Laura Dern, stabbed in the guts with a screwdriver, drags herself along the fabled Hollywood Walk of Fame. Restaging the cliché that 'film stars never die', Lynch implants this fake death at the climax of what is, for him, a three-hour exercise in the new stock in trade of digital filmmaking. Predictable signifiers of horror movie violence – Dern's neon-lit screams, her frantic freefall, a last vomit of bodily fluids – serve as the backdrop for Lynch's ultimate gag. Tracking out from a closeup on Dern's stiffening face, our perspective slowly widens to include a bulky camera crane intruding upon the frame. The director yells 'Cut!', and Dern, barely dead, rises from her fate. Neither the film-within-a-film nor the film we are watching has ended. The film star is not dead, and will not die.

Inland Empire, Lynch's first feature-length film shot and edited exclusively with digital video technology, is strewn with the corpses of such un-deaths. Interspersed throughout are flashbacks to other women who have, like Dern, been rammed through with a screwdriver, their innards casually exposed. These women never stay dead, returning like slapstick zombies to prolong the length of the film. Thus I begin my reading of *Inland Empire* by giving away the ending (or lack of one) because it is through the interminable experience of it that I hope to articulate its similarly inconclusive stakes. What does it mean that *Inland Empire* – arguably Lynch's most inscrutable work to date – revolves around cinema's oldest formula: 'A Woman in Trouble', as its tagline states? How might Lynch's experimentation with the digital perpetuate woman's status as an already exhausted object of violence? What sort of horror is this, finally, where death is not allowed?

1 Martha P. Nochimson, *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 88.

2 Michel Chion, *David Lynch*, 2nd edn, trans. Robert Julian (London: British Film Institute, 2006), p. 4. Lynch's art shares this tendency: 'One year I made a kind of electric pool table, in which you dropped a ball-bearing which went down a ramp, setting off a whole series of contacts that first struck a match on a scraper to light a firecracker, then others opened the woman's mouth, lit up a red bulb and made her scream when the firecracker exploded'. Lynch, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 9.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

5 Amy Taubin, 'The big rupture: David Lynch, Richard Kelly, and the new cinematic Gestalt', *Film Comment*, no. 238 (2007), p. 56.

6 Kristin Jones, 'Light and dark', *Frieze*, no. 107 (2007).

7 Michael Atkinson, 'Absurdia: David Lynch's semiconscious menagerie unleashed', *The Stranger*, 26 January 2007.

Existing scholarship on Lynch has noted the incessant thematization of women and death in his work. Martha Nochimson suggests that the central conflict in Lynch's films is between the 'imbalances of phallogentric aggression' and his faith in the sacrificial 'openness' of a 'feminine, labial receptivity'.¹ Michel Chion, in contrast, sidesteps this hagiographic recuperation to point out that Lynch unmistakably 'enjoys manipulating the subject of women to elicit a reaction',² rousing them to 'live, move, and talk' even after he has killed them off. 'In Lynch's films,' Chion writes, 'it is hard to die for real'.³ Indeed, his female victims inevitably find themselves in a dream-like or nightmarish 'beyond'. While Nochimson valorizes this cryptic state of transcendence as redemptive, Chion regards it, in a more sinister cast, to be 'clearly designated ... as a place where one never dies'.⁴

Following Nochimson and Chion, criticism of *Inland Empire* has vacillated on this murky divide between Lynch's apparent misogyny and his boldly experimental aesthetics. On the one hand, as Amy Taubin reasons, 'the sadism visited upon women'⁵ throughout *Inland Empire* could be seen as an indictment of the creative, economic and gendered constraints of the Hollywood entertainment industry in favour of an ultimately liberating portrayal of a 'higher' (coded 'feminine') consciousness, both Dern's and Lynch's own, at work. This plausible though somewhat tidy reading seems to be at cross-purposes with Kristin Jones's more vexed comment that *Inland Empire* is so 'wildly challenging' that it makes Lynch's preceding film *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) 'feel downright classical'.⁶ Michael Atkinson likewise underscores the brutalization of the spectator's critical faculties. With its polyglot profusion of genres and media, *Inland Empire* amounts to a kind of digital-cinematic exquisite corpse. In Atkinson's estimation, the film is so 'uncompromising' and 'hermetically sealed' that it can be taken only as 'purely a movie and nothing else', deliberately constructed to 'evade the butterfly nets of critical response'.⁷

Against these rhetorical extremes, I shall instead approach *Inland Empire* as a testing ground for the familiar gestures and movements of Lynch's stylistic repertoire as he works within a new format. This essay embraces the gambit of the director's notorious rejection of any one intention or meaning behind his work. It eschews the temptation to overdetermine *Inland Empire*'s textual complexity, either by narrativizing it into the mere fantasy emanating from the psyche of a single character or neutralizing its sexual violence by focusing on the film's purely formal aspects. In trying to bridge these hermeneutic poles, I propose one route among many across *Inland Empire*'s protean, almost hypertextualized, surface. By reading key vignettes in a film that is more a collection of recurring symptoms – of a director exploring the new contours of a beloved object suddenly made strange again – than a stable system, I hope to bring into relief what I see as an ethics of *return* in Lynch's cinema. The terrorized figure of woman in the film works in dialectical synthesis with Lynch's ongoing investigation into the ever-changing materiality of the

cinematic medium. Exploiting the longstanding power of the female figure at the iconic heart of classical Hollywood cinema, her many reincarnations in *Inland Empire* illustrate the layered substrate of Lynch's cinematic sadism.

For his part, after his initiation into the production capabilities of the digital, Lynch has emphatically declared that 'Film is dead'.⁸ Coming from a director who regularly employs death as just another trick ending, this statement may be considered suspect. Positioning my analysis within the established discourse on the feminine and death in Lynch's work, I contend that *Inland Empire* is his response to another death that is not one – namely, the equally interminable 'death of cinema'. While it is not in the purview of this essay to engage extensively with the already very advanced debates on that subject, I nonetheless bring this other 'death' into play because the idea of the cinema itself as a dying 'body' helps to illuminate Lynch's mechanisms of disavowal. Death in *Inland Empire* is a stylistic ploy imposed upon a body – that of woman and of film – that will not die (or that Lynch will not let die), kept uncannily alive in a sadistic refusal of finitude. Through the insistent *camp* resurrection of Laura Dern, I show how the battered female star becomes the allegorical support for the director's possessive return to the pleasures of a cinema that relies on doubling and proliferating the undead. By taking *Inland Empire* as a limit case for Lynch's style, this essay attempts to master the auteur's increasing impenetrability as he digitally remasters, so to speak, his signature mind-fucks of affective excess and horror.

Before turning to *Inland Empire*, however, it is necessary to address the corollary figure of the dying or dead female star within a wider cinematic history. Revived in Lynch's film, she haunts the cinema with an uncanny tenacity. Long a fixture of the Hollywood – and specifically the camp Hollywood – mythos, she is a natural addition to Lynch's exceedingly unnatural collection of dancing midgets, lip-synching mobsters and bobby-socked femmes fatales. As Susan Sontag writes in 'Notes on camp', the point of camp is that 'style is everything':⁹

Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a 'lamp'; not a woman, but a 'woman'. To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater.¹⁰

The lens of camp – and the lens of Lynch, I would add – blocks out content for the sake of 'the double sense in which things can be taken'. This double sense is not the difference between a literal and a symbolic meaning. Rather, in the duplicity of gesture hinted at above, it is between 'the thing as meaning something, anything, and the thing as pure artifice'.¹¹

The triumph of style over substance, in other words, is the rule of camp, which 'adores cliché, surface, image'.¹² This is the rule that Lynch follows

8 David Lynch, *Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness and Creativity* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2006), p. 49.

9 Susan Sontag, 'Notes on camp', in *Against Interpretation* (New York, NY: Anchor Doubleday Books, 1966), p. 288.

10 Ibid., p. 280.

11 Ibid., p. 281.

12 Caryl Flynn, 'The deaths of camp', in Fabio Cleto (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 440.

across an *oeuvre* that plumbs the spoils of an outdated cinematic iconography. The dead female star is but one stylistic and narrative staple for Lynch who, in almost all his work, habitually collapses the present into the alluring trappings and textures of a bygone (primarily 1950s) era. Shedding light on camp qua nostalgia in this manner, Andrew Ross in his 'Uses of camp' categorizes it as a 'parasitical practice'.¹³ Camp reappropriates – or puts into Sontag's knowing quotation marks – whatever has become defunct and devalued within the hegemony of the contemporary mainstream. Not only does camp poke fun at the serious or straightforward version of cultural production, it is a mortifying process (with all the accompanying associations of necrosis and embarrassment) that thrives on 'deceased cultural forms', recirculating them 'this time around, with the glamour of resurrection'.¹⁴

Reminiscent of the retro inclinations in both style and content of Lynch's cinema, this camp parasitism especially attaches itself to the female figure. Camp's fascination with the female star epitomizes its peculiar ethos of excess. The divergence between real and fake, past and present is embodied in the female star, whose own 'excesses', as Caryl Flynn astutely observes, are 'gauged in terms of temporal dislocation'.¹⁵ This widening gap between 'seeming' and 'being', 'then' and 'now', is camp's playground. Camp classics such as *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950) and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, 1962) dramatize the 'necrophilic economy that underpins the camp sensibility'.¹⁶ The fallen divas in these fables of the dying or forgotten star are the casualties of age no less than 'changes in cultural technologies'.¹⁷ The shift from silent to sound film, or from the big-budget studio system to the less exalted television industry, for example, renders them prematurely 'dead', embalmed in the obsolescent media vaults of cultural memory. Confined to dilapidated Beverly Hills mansions and dolled up in the finery of yesteryear, they linger on as the grotesque afterimages of their younger selves.

The implicit cause and effect of media transition in hastening the demise of these once exalted stars will contribute strongly, as I shall show, to the structural logic behind the digitally bred horror of *Inland Empire*, which dwells parasitically upon the outdated tropes of a mediated past. More generally, though, the morbid pathos of camp explains much of Lynch's own taste for offbeat anachronism. 'Camp demands disphasure', Flynn continues, 'not just of signifier and signified, but a more general being out of step, a lagging behind, a barrier between subject and object'.¹⁸ While Lynch is not campy in the tongue-in-cheek spirit of John Waters, Robert Aldrich or Billy Wilder, his retro carnivalesque fetishization of the female star does reduce her to a code or abstract system to be viciously parodied and, indeed, camped.¹⁹ Literalizing the glorified camp link between glamour and death, Lynch splits his female star not just into woman and 'woman', icon and reality, but into an entire panoply of distorted afterimages. In his merciless abstraction and reengineering of her image, Lynch, in his own singularly sadistic way, fulfils Hitchcock's

13 Andrew Ross, 'Uses of camp', in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), p. 139.

14 Ibid., p. 151.

15 Flynn, 'The deaths of camp', p. 443.

16 Ross, 'Uses of camp', p. 152.

17 Ibid., p. 137.

18 Flynn, 'The deaths of camp', p. 438.

19 Robert Aldrich's rarely-screened and still undistributed *The Legend of Lylah Clare* (1968), starring Kim Novak, is an interesting intertext for *Inland Empire*'s camping of the female star. In a spoof on *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), Novak reprises her role as the uncanny double of a dead woman – here a vaguely Garbo-esque, secretly lesbian actress. Aldrich's glitzy expose of the Hollywood star-making industry would become celebrated as one of the best bad movies ever.

succinct dictum (borrowed from French dramatist Victorien Sardou's advice to aspiring playwrights) to 'Torture the woman!'. Where Hitchcock's 'abuse' of his female characters reliably led, however, to increasing feats of narrative sophistication, Lynch pursues the possibilities of feminized horror to lethal extremes. From the paranormal butchery of Laura Palmer in *Twin Peaks* (1990-91) to the hysterical suicide of Betty Elms in *Mulholland Dr.* to Dern's unending joke murder, his cinematic corpus plays out like one long rehearsal of death – a death which is, in its exceptionally decorative brutality, more style than substance.

Remarking on horror's occasional 'lapse into camp', Carol Clover comments: 'The art of the horror film, like the art of pornography, is to a very large extent the art of rendition or performance'.²⁰ This affinity between camp, horror and, instructively, pornography is apparent throughout *Inland Empire*. While not pornographic by conventional standards, the film's 'miasma' of 'non-narrative rhythms', both 'turgid' and 'unrelenting' as J. Hoberman has vividly put it, shares some of that genre's mechanistic excesses.²¹ In what follows, I trace how Lynch, an expert 'in the technical production of uncanny effects',²² approaches something like a 'pornography of the uncanny' in *Inland Empire*. Incorporating the digital as a new tool for his torture of Dern, he enacts her 'glamorous resurrection' in a near farcical cycle of mock-psychoanalytic terror.

In an overlap between reality and fiction, an ageing Gloria Swanson as the senile Norma Desmond watches a film that Swanson never completed, Erich von Stroheim's *Queen Kelly* (1929), during a scene in *Sunset Boulevard*.²³ An intertitle card reads: 'Cast out this wicked dream which has seized my heart!' This phrase reappears again midway through *Inland Empire*. Dern, a fading Hollywood actress in her comeback role in a remake of an old film, has an eerie moment of dissociation. She comes across the apparition (improbably emanating from a large ketchup stain) of the murdered Polish actress who starred in the film's unfinished original, entitled *4/7* – based on *Axxon N*, the 'longest-running radio play in history' – repeating these very lines. This citation arrives after tangled convolutions of plot, character and setting in *Inland Empire*'s film-within-a-film-within-several-unfinished-films. A desperate plea from a buried cinematic past, it resonates with both our and Dern's uneasiness that what we are seeing, and what we have seen or will see, is part of a haunted web across space, time and media.

The theme of the uncanny – one of the most prevalent concepts applied to Lynch's cinema – will be deployed here in particular juxtaposition to the idea of camp. Freud's essay on the 'uncanny' resembles Sontag's 'Notes on camp' insofar as it, too, is an open-ended theory of a feeling. The uncanny, as Freud defines it, is 'that class of the terrifying which leads us back to something long known to us, once very familiar'. It belongs, according to Freud, to all that 'arouses dread or creeping horror'.²⁴ If camp celebrates death in a 'glamorous resurrection', the uncanny is a corresponding aesthetic of the *undead*. The decrepit female

²⁰ Carol Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 10.

²¹ J. Hoberman, 'Wild at Heart', *The Village Voice*, 28 November 2006.

²² Steven Jay Schneider, 'The essential evil in/of *Eraserhead* (or, Lynch to the contrary)', in Erica Scheen and Annette Davison (eds), *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions* (London: Wallflower, 2004), p. 12.

²³ See Michael Koller's essay in *Senses of Cinema on Queen Kelly's* troubled production history and its failure due to the popular rise of sound film, 'Erich von Stroheim's damned queen: *Queen Kelly*', <<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2007/cteq/queen-kelly/>> accessed 12 September 2011. Ironically, Stroheim's film would receive its first widespread public premiere thirty years later inside Wilder's film.

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'The uncanny', in *On Creativity and the Unconscious* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 122.

star of camp is the unspoken inspiration for the uncanny horror of *Inland Empire*. Resuscitating her for the digital age, Lynch systematically figures her through the double or *Doppelgänger*. The uncanny double ‘possesses knowledge, feeling, and experience in common with the other, identifies [herself] with another person, so that [her] self becomes confounded, or the foreign self is substituted for [her] own’. In this ominous circuit of ‘telepathy’, the recurrence of ‘similar situations, a same face, character-trait, twist of fortune, or a same crime’ unveils ‘that which ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light’.²⁵

The ‘hidden and secret’ history that Lynch invokes throughout *Inland Empire* belongs to that same ‘cult of Hollywoodiana’ which is the object of camp obsession. His reference to an obscure detail in *Sunset Boulevard*, which is in turn an obscure reference to a film that came before it, which in turn mirrors *Inland Empire*’s nested formal structure, captures the dizzying logic of dread that suffuses the film. Strung together as a series of loosely-connected episodes and vignettes, *Inland Empire* does not form a narrative whole so much as a Byzantine assemblage of conventions, tropes and stock character types recycled from a collective pop-cultural consciousness. The film-within-a-film, the film about filmmaking, the adulterous love triangle, the domestic melodrama, the noir murder mystery, the gothic romance, and even the talk show, sitcom and behind-the-scenes verite of reality TV are all evoked. These heterogeneous scenarios constitute the indispensable background of Dern’s multiple realities. Subtly infused with the spirit of ‘being-as-playing-a-role’, however, they too appear as if in quotation marks – a camp-tinged pastiche of those realities. Materializing the ‘double sense’ of camp style into the uncanny content of the film itself, Lynch unfolds Freud’s ‘theory of a feeling’ on a cinematic scale.

Dern, as *Inland Empire*’s titular ‘woman in trouble’, is Lynch’s version of the noir heroine who may be hysteric, missing or dead but must invariably return to pay the ‘debt’ for her crimes. As the movie star Nikki Grace, Dern plays the cheating housewife Susan Blue in the saccharine melodrama *On High in Blue Tomorrows*. An early scene between Dern and her costar Justin Theroux signals the first of *Inland Empire*’s many uncanny doublings. The scene follows the revelation that the stars of the uncompleted Polish adaptation of the film were murdered, victims of a ‘secret’ within the story. In portentous mimicry of that past, Dern as Nikki confides to her costar that her husband knows about their secret affair, just as their characters are engaged in one within the film’s love story. Framed in an awkward fishbowl closeup, she implores him in the affected tone of a bad soap opera star: ‘I think my husband knows about you – about us. He’ll kill you. He’ll kill us both!’ Struck by her own hackneyed histrionics, she straightens up in the middle of her sentence to exclaim, ‘Damn! This sounds like dialogue from our script!’ As the angry director (Jeremy Irons) interjects from offscreen, Lynch abruptly cuts to a camera dolly that has been presiding over the supposedly private exchange. A baffled Dern belatedly realizes she has mistaken the movie set of *On High*

in *Blue Tomorrows* for her reality. Foreshadowing the trick death on Hollywood Boulevard, Lynch sets up dual visual tracks, one 'real' and one 'fake'. The prop camera furtively planted as the 'real' recording device serves as a misleading decoy for the digital camera that hovers elusively outside the frame. Injecting the foreign into the familiar, Lynch inscribes the uncanny here as a threatening perspectival reversal within the narrative 'double features' he establishes. In this disquieting preview of things to come, we are called upon, like Dern, to interrogate the reality – or the movie – we take for granted, as if there were always a parallel universe slightly beyond our immediate perception.

The prefix 'para' can mean either 'against' or 'beside'. Lynch activates both connotations in the rampant textual paranoia of *Inland Empire*, where everything can mean what it seems to mean and something else entirely. Elaborating on Freud, Jean-Claude Milner theorizes the uncanny, or *unheimlich*, as a kind of parasite:

The *unheimlich* is not the inverse of the familiar, but the familiar parasitized by an anxiety that disperses it. In the same way, one would readily say that in the modern universe, there is no distinction between the domain of the infinite and the domain of the finite, but that the infinite perpetually parasitizes the finite insofar as everything infinite is fundamentally posed as able to be infinitely other than it is. ... In a similar manner in psychoanalysis, the unconscious perpetually parasitizes consciousness, thereby manifesting how consciousness can be other than it is, yet not without a cost: it establishes precisely how it cannot be other. The negative prefix is nothing more than the seal of this parasitism.²⁶

²⁶ Jean-Claude Milner, 'The doctrine of science', *UMRA(a)*, no. 1 (2000), p. 57.

Milner's provocative statement that the 'infinite perpetually parasitizes the finite' will develop as a forceful subtext as *Inland Empire* progresses. For now, I would stress that the notion of the uncanny as a 'parasite' aligns with camp as a 'parasitical practice' that reinhabits denatured cultural significations. The 'un' of the uncanny, as Milner takes pains to distinguish, is not the inverse of, but a surplus that attaches itself to, the familiar. The familiar does not become unfamiliar, but strange in its overfamiliarity. Similarly, if the uncanny parasitizes the familiar, camp likewise parasitizes the 'cliché, surface, image' identified by Flynn. The rote scenarios of distress Lynch assigns to Dern's woman in trouble in *Inland Empire* is the domain of the familiar uncannily distorted through his camp lens 'of the exaggerated, the off, of *things-being-what-they-are-not*'.²⁷ Recognizing herself as a cliché, Dern is nonetheless trapped in her roles-within-roles in films-within-films – roles and films that alarmingly spill over into reality, and vice versa – compelled to perform her own fracturing of identity as stipulated by Lynch's self-replicating script.

A subsequent scene integrates Nikki's/Susan's fear of a murderous husband into the routine plot device of the noir heroine who seeks out a private detective for help. Shot from an off-kilter angle that insinuates her growing uncertainty, a battered Dern, her step unbalanced, climbs a

²⁷ Sontag, 'Notes on camp', p. 279.

28 Lynch improvised *Inland Empire* around this fourteen-page monologue he wrote for Dern. See Lynch, *Catching the Big Fish*, p. 139.

shadowy flight of stairs to a dim office where a silent man in a shabby suit awaits her. The camera quietly fixes on her bruised face and haphazard lipstick, this time conjuring a beleaguered survivor of domestic violence rather than a ditz soap opera star. Without prologue, Dern unsteadily launches into a bitter diatribe about the countless contemptible men in her life: a man who lunged at her with a crowbar; a man whose eyes she gouged out in self-defence; a man with a dick the size of a rhinoceros that ‘fucked the shit’ out of her; a man she kicked so hard that ‘his nuts went crawling up into his brain for refuge’. These graphic iterations of sexual violence are gratuitous insofar as we are not sure why and to whom Dern is recounting them, and what has transpired since we last saw her as either Nikki or Susan. She echoes our growing confusion over her blurred identities – over who came before or after – when she desperately admits, looking straight into the camera as if supplicating our help: ‘The thing is, I don’t know what was before or after. I don’t know what happened first, and it’s kind of laid a mind-fuck on me.’

This ‘mind-fuck’ could be, from one perspective, the aftermath of the abuse inflicted upon her. Dern’s character appears powerless to construct a coherent chronology from the sheer quantitative overload of physical assaults she has endured. From another perspective, it is the inescapable manifestation of the uncanny temporal structure of the film itself. Lynch inserts this episode – the first one shot with Dern for the film – as a looping interlude throughout the latter half of *Inland Empire*.²⁸ Excerpted in discontinuous fragments, it is impossible to determine when it begins or ends, or whether it is Nikki or Susan that is speaking. Through the constant chiasmus of Dern’s doubles, Lynch chronically advances our doubt – as he does hers – about which one is in fact parasitizing the other. In yet another uncanny merging of the ‘on’ and ‘off’-screen – one that leaches into our reality – Dern pinpoints what we ourselves might be thinking when she compares her hallucinatory shock to being a spectator of her own life: ‘I was watching everything going around me’, she says, ‘while standing in the middle, watching it, like in a dark theatre before they bring up the lights up. I’m sitting there, wondering how can this be.’ Dern’s reflection on the circularity of her world is itself an uncanny reflection on the temporal and spatial disphasure of Lynch’s interweaving of media upon media, identity upon identity. It belies what I have suggested as Lynch’s ethics of return – an ethics that does not so much differentiate between right and wrong, good and evil, but rather pushes our spectatorial tolerance via an abrasive formal violence that pierces through layers of appearance to excavate that which has been repressed. This repressed always reappears, like Dern’s oscillating personas, in the shape of something else, someone other.

Formalizing this ‘return of the repressed’ into a guiding aesthetic principle, Lynch multiplies the suffering of his bewildered female star into its own ethical imperative. The experience Dern cites of dissociating from her body – a body filmed not just by one ‘film’ camera, but also by the

digital one that parasitizes it – coincides with the 'doubling, dividing, and interchanging of the self' that is a sign of the uncanny. The *Doppelgänger*, Freud explains, is both an 'assurance of immortality' as well as a 'ghastly harbinger of death'.²⁹ In this dual role, the uncanny double therefore anticipates an impending limbo of *undeadness*. As with the 'un' of the uncanny, the 'un' of the undead does not designate the opposite of the living but something *beyond* the living or the dead. A typical symbol of the uncanny, for instance, is the automaton. Not quite alive yet mechanically propelled into the semblance of life, it exemplifies the alienating excess of the uncanny. This excess matches up with Freud's assertion that the uncanny is fundamentally a deferred repression that eats away at the surface of the familiar. In the aforementioned passage from Milner, the unconscious is where the parasitical possibilities to consciousness reside. Arising out of the repressed rift between the conscious and unconscious, the disjunctive effect of the uncanny derives from the recognition of the potential for things being always somehow *other* than they seem. Aggressively figuring the uncanny through Dern's liminal performance of undeadness – of being neither alive nor dead, neither real nor fake – Lynch mines the embodied excess at the intersection of camp and horror.

Tellingly, there is a cinematic tenor to Dern's professed splitting of the self. Dern stumbles upon the awareness that she may not be who she thinks she is but may in fact be 'seized' by a 'wicked dream' of someone else's making. Like a babbling automaton, she reels off her woes in a barrage of anecdotal run-ons. In the context of her character, Dern's psychological disarray might be the result of her repressed traumas breaking through in the course of her digressive litany of violence. More persuasively, though, I would argue that it is the product of Lynch's formal torture. Her afflictions – at the hands of the anonymous parade of men or, more pointedly, of Lynch's cinematic machinations – do not, miraculously, lead to her death. Mired 'in that sense of helplessness experienced in dreams',³⁰ her suffering is redistributed into alter egos that each nauseatingly carries one within the other in a deranged fugue. Suspended in a time-warp of herself, Dern is confronted with increasingly uncanny doubles in Lynch's startling spatial and temporal conundrums of the familiar turned inside out, forward and backward.

The sexually explicit material of Dern's monologue, moreover, provides a segue into the more overtly pornographic dimension of *Inland Empire*. Etymologically, pornography denotes 'the writing of prostitutes'. The bulk of Lynch's film is a lurid collage of variations on a theme of the uncanny, hewing ever more closely to Freud's autobiographical account of the uncanny as his unwitting return to a red light district populated by 'painted women'. Lynch introduces the theme of prostitution obliquely at first, via the allusions to 'whores' and 'fucking', 'tits and ass' that pepper the film. Then, in a striking non sequitur, Dern finds herself surrounded by a garish troupe of prostitutes in her red lamp-lit bedroom. Lounging around smoking cigarettes and licking their lips, the women casually

discuss the men they have fucked. These are the same women we see in the flashbacks to a sepia-toned 1930s Poland, in which they taunt the murdered Polish actress (Karolina Gruzka), the historical double to Dern's 'woman in trouble'. In a prophetic reenactment of the past, they also taunt Dern before she is murdered on Hollywood Boulevard. Like a promiscuous Greek chorus spouting lines from Freud's smutty nightmare, they tease both women: 'Look at us, and tell us if you've known us before'.

The recurrent appearance of these prostitutes, along with Dern's uncensored sexual trials, shifts the tone of Lynch's 'pornography of the uncanny' to a decidedly sadistic register. Rather than just the uncanny double, these scenes summon up another double that is the function, precisely, of too much sexual violence. I refer here to the 'beautiful victim' of the Sadean executioner. In the Marquis de Sade's chronicles, the women are the chief narrators of their survival under untenable male violations. Dern's catalogue of sexual debasement inaugurates what I interpret to be a transition – a marked difference in degree – in Lynch's figuration of the undead. In a passage that elegantly encapsulates the ramifications of this difference in degree, Jacques Lacan writes:

In the Sadean scenario, suffering doesn't lead the victim to the point where she is dismembered or destroyed. It seems rather that the object of all the torture is to retain the capacity of being an indestructible support. Analysis shows clearly that the subject separates out a double of [herself] who is made inaccessible to destruction, so as to make it support what, borrowing a term from the realm of aesthetics, one cannot help calling the play of pain.³¹

The persecuted noir heroine that Dern represents could be classified as the 'beautiful victim' of the Hollywood system's ideological 'play of pain' insofar as she must stay intact as a cipher for male guilt and anxiety. Such psychoanalytic platitudes compose more of a motif than a motive, however, in Lynch's extraction of the well-worn codes of that system.³² Balanced somewhere between the uncanny and the sadistic, Lynch's 'punishment' of Dern fits more squarely within that 'realm of aesthetics' that is his unique sublation of substance into style.

Through his camp antics with the dead and doubled female star, Lynch satisfies the truism that 'sadism lies at the heart of all patriarchy, pornography, and dominant narrative cinema',³³ without taking it all the way – or, to be more accurate, by taking it much too far. In his exaggerated stylization of death, Lynch's 'sadism' assimilates what Gilles Deleuze has called the 'mechanical, cumulative repetition of Sade'.³⁴ Dern's life is not, as would seem to be the case, the target of Lynch's violence; the real violence lies in his outrageously protracted dragging out of her death. Echoing the closeup of the old-fashioned phonograph whose crackling and spinning opens the film – and which, superimposed over Dern's face, reoccurs throughout *Inland Empire* – Dern is etched in the grooves of Lynch's cinematic revolutions, eternally played under his needle. As long

31 Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, Seminar VII*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1992), p. 261.

32 Lynch could also be seen as abstracting from the codes of the historical avant garde, particularly the trance film tradition of Maya Deren's *Meshe of the Afternoon* (1943) with its elements of noir, the female star, and doubling; or of Kenneth Anger, with his lushly hypnotic tributes to an occult Hollywood iconography.

33 Linda Williams, *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), p. 204. Although I cite Williams here as representative of this argument, she and others have significantly complicated its assumptions. See also Gaylyn Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich and the Masochistic Aesthetic* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988) for a counter-argument on masochism as a central organizing mode of classical Hollywood cinema and its structures of pleasure and identification.

34 Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), p. 34.

as she is stuck within the inexorable circles of Lynch's parasitically proliferating parallel worlds, death will never restore her to her absolute singularity.

Sontag's breakdown of the death-defying aesthetics of Sade in her essay 'The pornographic imagination' readily transposes to an understanding of this impossibility of death in Lynch. Sontag helps to clarify the aesthetic measure of Lynch's interminable compulsion to 'torture the woman':

People often die in Sade's books. But these deaths always seem unreal. ... Indeed, one might speculate that the fatiguing repetitiveness of Sade's books is the consequence of his imaginative failure to confront the inevitable goal or haven of a truly systematic venture of the pornographic imagination. Death is the only end to the odyssey of the pornographic imagination when it becomes systematic; that is, when it becomes focused on the pleasures of transgression rather than mere pleasure itself. Since he could not or would not arrive at his ending, Sade stalled. He multiplied and thickened his narrative, tediously reduplicating orgiastic permutations and combinations.³⁵

³⁵ Susan Sontag, 'The pornographic imagination', in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York, NY: Picador, 1966), p. 62.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, p. 20.

Since death, apparently, is also not an option for Lynch, in *Inland Empire* he perpetuates a 'reiterated quantitative process of ... adding victim upon victim, again and again retracing the thousand circles of an irreducibly solitary argument'.³⁶ In the case of Sade, death is the condition of reality that must be disavowed in order to phantasmatically extend the pleasures of the sexual relation. For Lynch, however, whose pornographic tendencies are, by Sontag's criteria, more transgressive than Sade's, the mastery of death constitutes its own infinitely absorbing pleasure. Instead of 'adding victim upon victim', Lynch simply divides one woman into many. Dern not only returns as herself, but always as *more* than herself as she consistently continues to not die. As the representational violence against Dern escalates, the Sadean double that *cannot* die begins to overshadow the uncanny double that persists *undead*.

The false denouement of Dern's not dying on Hollywood Boulevard ushers in this ascendance of the Sadean double over the uncanny double in *Inland Empire*. After the cameras have stopped rolling, Dern strays off the movie soundstage into a vacant auditorium. Projected on the big screen is her conversation with the private detective. She fearfully watches herself recite the prescient lines we have heard before, resounding throughout the empty theatre: 'I was watching everything going around ... like in a dark theatre before they bring the lights up ... wondering how can this be'. This reiteration of the same lines from the film-within-the-film, which previously reflected our situation as spectators, now resituates Dern in a horrifying tautology. The Sadean double as a creature of quantity, or as an indestructible leftover of excessive violence, is made painfully conspicuous here. Dern witnesses the resurrection of her dead screen double blown up to gigantically disorientating proportions (figure 1).

Fig. 1. Dern witnesses her gigantic double on screen. *Inland Empire* (David Lynch, 2006).



Fig. 2. Digital simultaneity: the film broadcast on television. *Inland Empire* (David Lynch, 2006).



The dwarfing aspect of this posthumous encounter is also significant in a more digitally determined respect. As a visual metaphor it marks a confrontation between the ‘dying’ body of film and the digital substitute that alters the terms of cinematic scale. The macabre theatrics of a film such as *Sunset Boulevard* is predicated upon the decline of a female star unable to adapt to ‘changes in cultural technologies’, usually entailing a degrading diminution in the quality and size of her image. As it does throughout the film, though, the intervention of the digital here overpowers Dern’s self-bearings. Lynch reflexively points to the digital’s exorbitant ability to camp up the cinematic medium – to amplify it even bigger than its bigger-than-life mystique – in Dern’s recursive and hyperbolized image, which elicits terror rather than pathos. While there are no special effects in *Inland Empire* that cannot be achieved through a careful splicing, superimposing and montaging of celluloid, it is the instantaneous virtuosity of the digital with its exponential ubiquity, duration and scale that enables Lynch’s profligate doubling and dividing, magnifying and shrinking of his female star in his unwieldy experiment of cinematic time and space split and dispersed.

Fig. 3. Dern fades away as she kisses her Polish double. *Inland Empire* (David Lynch, 2006).



Fig. 4. The final image: the digitally remastered woman in trouble. *Inland Empire* (David Lynch, 2006).



The closing scenes of *Inland Empire*, like that of Dern's 'death', retract into yet another acrobatic reframing of her image. The intersections of past and present, actual and virtual, conjured throughout the film converge in an entropic déjà vu of digital simultaneity. Dern reenters the film-within-a-film that infects her reality even after it has ostensibly ended. Returning to her red lamp-lit bedroom, Dern finds a gun. She wanders into the corridors of what appears to be a deserted hotel, ending up at room number 47, the title of the cursed Polish film that plagues *On High in Blue Tomorrows*. A character credited only as the 'Phantom' guards the door. Dern shoots him several times as he inches towards her in sinister fashion. As she fires her last bullet, Dern's face flashes beneath the Phantom's. In an archetypal expression of Lynch's camp sadism, her face is monstrously stretched out like a murderous clown's, blood gushing from the mouth. The door to room 47 clicks open as Dern's desecrated visage dissolves in front of her. Dern backs through the door into the empty set of what we have come to recognize as the stage for *Inland Empire*'s 'rabbit sitcom', in which the elliptical pronouncements of the three human-sized rabbits (voiced by Naomi Watts, Laura Harring and Scott Coffey) meet with

canned laughter and applause. Wandering into the ruins of their televisual universe, Dern appears, in her exorcism of the Phantom, to have unlocked the previously blocked connection between the different mediated realms of the story. We watch as she crosses into the same time and space as her murdered historical double.

This other double, the 'lost' Polish actress of 4/7, has been the rapt spectator of the 'wicked dream' that likewise parasitizes her reality. She has followed the entirety of *Inland Empire* broadcast on her television in real time. As Dern's gaze drifts into the blinding light of the spotlight on the rabbit stage, Lynch cuts to the hotel room in which the lost girl has been trapped. As we watch the girl watching the television, Dern's shadowy form is outlined in its screen as she enters the room. The girl tentatively rises to greet her (figure 2). The image on our screen is reflected in the television, which reflects the same image from the television screen, and so on ad infinitum in an optical feedback loop of uncanny synchronization. Reunited in this redemptive contemporaneity, the pair wordlessly kiss as Dern fades out of the picture (figure 3). Dern is transported back to her couch in her Beverly Hills mansion and, in the last image of the film, she looks over at a double of herself sitting across the room, radiant and calm (figure 4).

In this absolving vision of grace, Lynch slyly adheres to the principle of ambiguous doubling he sustains throughout *Inland Empire*. By returning Dern to the comfort of her home, he depicts the original definition of the German *unheimlich* as a violence that springs from within the tame comfort of the domestic, just as, in the climactic shooting scene, Dern discovers herself 'inside' the Phantom that she must kill. Alternatively, this homecoming lends itself to a Sadean reading: despite Dern's tribulations under Lynch's tutelage, she remains pristinely untouched, poised for the whole apparatus of torture to begin again. Through this circular non-ending, Lynch substantiates Sontag's claim that 'camp taste transcends the nausea of the replica'.³⁷ Dern returns anew as Lynch's digitally remastered woman in trouble, wound tight into the reels of her timeless execution.

In interviews about the making of *Inland Empire*, Lynch effusively praises the newfound wonders of the digital medium. Citing its 'forty-minute takes', 'automatic focus', 'amazing flexibility and control' and 'ten thousand new tools',³⁸ he enthuses that 'the sky's the limit with the digital'. 'Film is beautiful', he concedes, 'but I would die if I had to go that slow ever again. It's not slow in a good way. It's death, death, death.'³⁹

And yet, as I have tried to show in this essay, despite his protestations Lynch's digitally produced *Inland Empire* may nevertheless be his most death-obsessed work. Lynch's endorsement of the speed and flexibility of the digital medium infinitely protracts his sadistic deferral of the finite nature of death. In Lynch's hands the 'death of cinema', like the 'death' of Laura Dern, is subject to an endless delay that is an aesthetic correlate to our newly possessive attitude towards the afterlife of the cinematic image. As

37 Sontag, 'Notes on camp', p. 289.

38 Lynch, *Catching the Big Fish*, p. 149.

39 David Lynch in interview with Michael Figgis, 'Into the abstract', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2007), pp. 18-19.

Laura Mulvey has argued in *Death 24x a Second*, with the advent of more ‘user-friendly’ electronic and digital technologies, spectators can replay and return with ease to privileged cinematic moments and scenes. Mulvey pertinently connects this phenomenon to the spectator’s ‘heightened relation to the human body, particularly that of the star’.⁴⁰ The contemplation and possession of the star – once relegated to the extracinematic paraphernalia of film stills and fan photos – can now unfold on screen, explicitly controlled by the viewer’s desire to revisit chosen looks, actions and gestures again and again. In a reversal of Mulvey’s classic paradigm of spectatorship, the sadistic instinct now lies not in the (male) protagonist’s or spectator’s driving forward of the plotline, but in the recursive retarding of narrative progression. Committing an ‘act of violence against the cohesion of the story’, this ‘possessive’ spectator, impelled by the pleasure of a digitally enabled repetition compulsion, watches as ‘the apparatus overtakes the [human] figure’s movement’. The fetishized star, more than ever before, ‘becomes an extension of the machine, conjuring up the pre-cinematic ghosts of automata’.⁴¹

In *Inland Empire* Lynch transmutes the violence of his ‘possessive’ spectatorship onto the body of Dern, who regresses from a star making her Hollywood comeback to one perpetually coming back, mechanized in an arrested development like one of those ghostly automata that are cinema’s uncanny precursors. For Mulvey the digital’s triggering of this particular return of the repressed constitutes both a pensive ‘acceptance of, and an escape from’ the knowledge of film’s ‘physical decline and technological displacement’.⁴² Far from a stance of mourning, for Lynch the seduction of the digital is exactly its power to displace the fragile materiality of the cinema into something that can truly serve as an ‘indestructible support’ for the aesthetic virtuosités of his infinite ‘play of pain’ through the abstracted figure of woman.

Lynch’s sadism is arguably part of a larger syndrome of ‘possessive’ cinephilia that moves the director not just to rewatch, but to reenact and reconstruct the ghosts of a treasured cinema – as he does with his nesting of *Sunset Boulevard* in *Inland Empire* – in his remixed remakes. As D. N. Rodowick observes in his aptly titled *The Virtual Life of Film*, one virtue of the digital is its practically limitless speed and fidelity of ‘copying and transmission’. Operating within a ‘accelerated relationship to time’, it permits information from the ‘cumulative past’, filmic or otherwise, to be felt immediately ‘connected or embedded’ in the present.⁴³ Utilizing the immense quantitative gains of the digital, Lynch imports and embeds the legacy of the cinema within it. Taking conceptual advantage of the digital’s boundless capacity for duplication and manipulation – ‘without generational loss or degradation of quality’⁴⁴ – Lynch drags out the cinema’s mythic death, resurrecting its cumulative array of motifs, conventions and signifying codes in an ever-expanding digital double.

This doubling and looping of the cinematic within the digital does not necessarily imply the redemption of film, much as Lynch’s sadistic renewal of his dead female star does not imply the redemption of woman.

⁴⁰ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 161.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴³ D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 146.

⁴⁴ Holly Willis, *New Digital Cinema: Reinventing the Moving Image* (London: Wallflower, 2005), p. 6.

In accordance with the unusual ethical bind of Lynch's allegiance to returning the repressed, the repression of death in *Inland Empire* itself comes back in the closing credit sequence in the guise of a musical parable. The seven-minute coda features a troupe of jubilant black dancers lip-synching to Nina Simone's famous 1965 cover of 'Sinnerman', a traditional American gospel song about running back and forth between the Lord and the Devil, Heaven and Hell. Amid the frantic refrain of the lyrics, 'Oh Sinnerman, where you gonna run to?', Lynch's camera surveys the electrified scene. Silently beaming from the couch, Dern presides over this celebratory purgatory of lost souls: gathered together are the 'imaginary' characters and 'unconscious' images, prominent among them the Greek chorus of prostitutes, that may or may not have actually appeared in the film. These fragments of *Inland Empire*'s undead return here transformed into lively automatons, endlessly looping to a song that thematizes an eternal moral limbo.⁴⁵

This image of a loop is a fitting emblem for Lynch's uncanny sadism. In *Inland Empire* Lynch orchestrates a digital meta-language that abstracts the cinema into a toy for his *fort/da* game between death and undeath in a chain of mise-en-scenes erected to showcase the mise-en-abyme of Dern. Taking a cue from Lynch's pornography of the uncanny, I conclude with a return to the death scene on Hollywood Boulevard. Dern's trick death is not, as I initially suggested, the backdrop for the joke Lynch plays on either her or us, but an excuse for the telling of one of his most dazzlingly 'loopy' yarns in another twist to his camp horror chronicles. This one features an Asian prostitute named Niko who lives in Pomona, a city in Southern California's Inland Empire. Niko wears a blonde wig that makes her look 'just like a movie star'. She keeps a pet monkey that can 'scream and scream like in a horror movie'. Unfortunately, Niko's 'time has run out', because she has 'got a hole in her vagina wall'. A fleshy metonym for the various 'holes' in *Inland Empire*, Niko's 'hole' is the *Heim*-like womb that is a standard trope for the uncanny; it is the rabbit hole of time through which Dern slips; and it is the very real hole wreaked upon the female body by a sadistic sexual violence.

'You don't have to die to do a death scene', Lynch has said.⁴⁶ This recalls Sontag's sentiment that, in terms of camp, it is not death but 'death', and that, at its heart, 'camp is a tender feeling'.⁴⁷ Taking death, not life, as his most extravagant theatre, no matter how many holes Lynch's excruciating tenderness may put into her or loop her through, the female star will forever be his mutely 'beautiful victim' – a punched-out cliché from the factory of dreams, memorialized only to be walked over:

The wheel revolves in its daily crucifixion. The cinema hinders [her] from dying. O cruel fate. O infernal torture not to be able to flee oneself. O the pain of immortality.⁴⁸

45 The 'hidden' film history behind the memorable Club Silencio sequence in *Mulholland Dr.* reveals Lynch's calculated embedding of Hollywood lore in his films. The scene was filmed at Los Angeles' Tower Theatre, which was the site for the West Coast premiere of *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first feature-length film using synchronized sound. In the scene Lynch dramatizes a phantasmatic de-synchronization of sound and image. The Master of Ceremonies repeats, 'Il n'y a pas d'orchestre. No hay banda' ['There is no band... it is all a tape'], as jazz musicians mime playing their instruments and singer Rebekah del Rio collapses (as if dead) while lip-synching to her own prerecorded Spanish rendition of Roy Orbison's 'Crying'.

46 Simon Hattenstone, 'Tender is the psycho', *The Age*, 21 July 2007.

47 Sontag, 'Notes on camp', p. 292.

48 Jean Arroy, *En tournant 'Napoléon' avec Abel Gance, 1927*, cited in Mikhail Lampolski, *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film*, trans. Harsha Ram (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 135.

The Mourning Television debate

Eluding elegy: placing *Screen* in one possible history of television studies

JEREMY G. BUTLER

¹ Annette Kuhn, 'Screen and screen theorizing today', *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2009), 50th Anniversary Issue, pp. 1–13.

² John Caughie, 'Mourning television: the other screen', *Screen*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2010), pp. 410–21.

Television and film studies took a distinctly Proustian turn in 2009 and 2010. In the USA and UK, at least, we screen academics nibbled our madeleines and began searching for lost time. Annette Kuhn provided an overview of fifty years of *Screen* time in 'Screen and screen theorizing today',¹ while John Caughie mourned television studies in the closing plenary paper from the 2009 fiftieth anniversary *Screen* conference. A version of the latter was included in this journal's 'Reports and Debates' section and is the catalyst for the following thoughts on television studies history.² Coincidentally, the Society for Cinema and Media Studies recently commemorated its own temporal event: the fiftieth anniversary of its first annual conference. Labeled 'SCMS @ 50', the 2010 conference was held at the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, confirming the Jamesonian, postmodern significance of the event. Television studies was not a part of the early conferences, perhaps unsurprisingly as the organization was then known as the Society of Cinematologists. These early cinematologists soon switched to a new name, the Society for Cinema Studies, and decades later in 2002 the membership somewhat grudgingly allowed that 'Media' might intrude into the middle of the Society's name. SCMS's journal, however, remains *Cinema Journal* to this day – make of that what you will. By contrast, the Society for

Education in Film and Television showed prescience, and avoided later squabbling, by choosing the inclusive 'Screen' as the title for its journal.

A key madeleine moment for television studies occurred during SCMS @ 50. The Society's Television Studies Scholarly Interest Group sponsored a workshop titled 'Reflecting on the Origins of Television Studies'. Personal histories of this relatively young discipline's evolution were offered by notable figures from the USA and the UK: Robert Allen, Christine Geraghty, Mary Beth Haralovich and Ellen Seiter. (John Hartley was scheduled to participate, but was unable to attend.) The Bonaventure conference room was full that day and the conversation was lively and entertaining. The elegiac tone that Caughie evoked while mourning television in his conference paper was mostly missing. I am certain, however, that many of the workshop participants shared the concern that Caughie articulates as 'the waning of an object of study which has simply been overwhelmed by too many texts – too many texts for the discipline of television studies to discipline; too many texts and too many carriers of texts'. After all, the workshop was chaired by Amanda Lotz, who recently wrote/edited two books with ominous titles: *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* and *Beyond Prime Time: Television Programming in the Post-Network Era*.³ But I prefer the hopeful note that Caughie strikes when he comments that 'perhaps it is precisely this recalcitrance, this disorderliness, that draws us to television studies and makes it worth keeping faith with its indiscipline'.⁴

It is worth remembering that television has long been a disorderly topic of study. When Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson collated the papers from the first International Television Studies Conference in London in 1984, they titled the anthology *Television in Transition*. But when have television and television studies *not* been in transition? Furthermore, television has also suffered several 'deaths', from the rise of cable and satellite delivery systems and the introduction of the VCR to today's online video streaming. And yet, even in 2011, television viewing is holding steady in the USA and television's competitors cannot figure out how to make money from their new delivery systems.⁵ All anyone truly knows for certain is that television is changing.

Screen's and SCMS's back-to-back golden anniversaries, Kuhn's and Caughie's evocative chronicles, and the 'Origins of Television Studies' workshop have all seemingly compelled the first generation of television studies scholars to search for its lost time, to recover some of its history. As a member of that generation I would like to contribute a few thoughts about the evolution of television studies and the significance, for me, of *Screen* in that evolution. While collecting these thoughts I generated a table, 'One possible timeline of notable television studies events' (see pp. 496–97). My timeline is an idiosyncratic and simplified one, with a likely bias towards US scholarship, but it includes the major events that influenced television studies scholars who migrated from film studies, like myself, and those whose interest in the medium has been informed by film theory. Consequently I have included many historical events that initially

3 Amanda D. Lotz (ed.), *Beyond Prime Time: Television Programming in the Post-Network Era* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), and *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007).

4 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 411.

5 In North America, Netflix is coming close to a profitable model for television distribution, but its streaming video offerings contain few recent television programmes. Instead, streamed television must be found on services such as Hulu and individual networks' websites.

pertained only to film studies but which later came to have an impact on television studies, such as the formation of academic film organizations that subsequently nurtured television studies.

Like many participants in television studies' formative years, I came of academic age during *Screen*'s 'notorious love affair with psychoanalytic theory', as Kuhn labels it in her account of the journal's fifty-year history.⁶ If I may be permitted a personal reminiscence, I can recall being quite intimidated by the first issue of *Screen* that I bought as an undergraduate: the 1973 double issue entitled 'Cinema Semiotics and the Work of Christian Metz'. At the time I was studying at a US university that offered an actual degree in semiotics, perhaps the first in the world. My professors and classmates were very serious about 'cinepsychoanalysis', as some called it, but I was more intrigued with the 'cinesemiotics' that is summarized in Stephen Heath's contribution to that issue.⁷ Heath introduced many of us young scholars-to-be to Charles Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, Christian Metz and Umberto Eco. He persisted in using the original French terms for Saussure's and Metz's concepts, as if translating them into English would sully them: *signifiant*, *signifié*, *langage*, *langue*, *parole* and, above all, *la Grande Syntagmatique*. The language was daunting, but it provided instruments for detailed descriptions of films at a time when film criticism was often quite imprecise and when, during those pre-VCR days, cinema scholars relied upon notes hastily scribbled in darkened auditoriums during repeated viewings of films. Unless you obtained a 16mm print of a film and threw it on a Steenbeck editing table or a projector that could pause without immediately melting the print, you were unable to halt the progression of images to make detailed observations.

Heath turned his attention to television four years later and, with Gillian Skirrow, published a *Screen* essay dissecting the 'Yesterday's Truants' documentary from the Granada-produced *World in Action* series.⁸ As Caughie highlights, '*Screen*'s theorizing today is still fundamentally what it was for Heath and Skirrow in 1977: "*stopping*" television to analyze and theorize its performance of the subject'.⁹ Stopping television's ceaseless flow was not a simple proposition at that time. The pioneering format of Heath and Skirrow's analysis is notable for its use of tables containing shot lists and for (low-resolution) photographs of the television image taken with a still film camera – distorted by the lack of synchronization between the camera's shutter and the monitor's scan lines (figure 1). Presumably they obtained a videotape of the programme (perhaps from the BFI Film and Video Library) and photographed a television monitor while it played. Heath and Skirrow's analysis and Raymond Williams's conceptualization of 'flow' three years earlier would have been lost on me at the time, I must confess, as I was too busy disassembling film melodramas by John Stahl and Douglas Sirk to pay much attention to the world of television.¹⁰ Indeed, nascent television scholar Ellen Seiter was in my Northwestern University graduate student cohort when this essay was published and neither of us owned a television set! I am certain we

6 Kuhn, 'Screen and screen theorizing today', p. 3.

7 Stephen Heath, 'Film/cinetext/text', *Screen*, vol. 14, nos 1/2 (1973), pp. 102–27.

8 Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, 'Television: a world in action', *Screen*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1977) pp. 7–60.

9 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 419.

10 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974). I am certain I read the 'Dossier on Melodrama' in that 1977 *Screen* issue long before reading Heath and Skirrow's television article.

One possible timeline of notable television studies events. Journals are listed by the date of their first issue; organizations are listed by the date of their founding.

-
- 1933 British Film Institute (restructured substantially in 1948)
- 1947 University Film Producers Association (renamed University Film Association, 1968; later renamed University Film and Video Association, 1982)
- 1949 *The Journal of the University Film Producers Association* (renamed *Journal of Film and Video*, 1984)
- 1952 *The Film Teacher* (The Society of Film Teachers)
- 1959 *Screen Education* (The Society for Education in Film and Television)
 'Special Television Number' of *Screen Education* (issue no. 2)
 The Society of Cinematologists (renamed Society for Cinema Studies, 1969; later renamed Society for Cinema and Media Studies, 2002; first conference, 1960)
- 1961 *The Journal of the Society of Cinematologists*
- 1964 The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), the University of Birmingham
- 1969 *Screen* (SEFT)
- 1971 First mention of 'television studies' in *Screen* (regarding a SEFT Summer School)
The Journal of Popular Film (renamed *The Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 1978)
- 1973 'Encoding and decoding in the television discourse' (Stuart Hall, CCCS paper)
 The BFI's first 'television monograph': *Structures of Television* (Nicholas Garnham)
- 1974 The concept of 'flow' – in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Raymond Williams)
TV: The Most Popular Art (Horace Newcomb)
- 1976 *Television: The Critical View* (Horace Newcomb; 7th edn, 2006)
 First widely used, consumer-grade VCR (Sony Betamax)
- 1977 'Television: a world in action' (Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, *Screen*)
- 1978 *Reading Television* (John Fiske and John Hartley)
- 1979 'The search for tomorrow in today's soap operas: notes on a feminine narrative form' (Tania Modleski, *Film Quarterly*)
- 1980 *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* (David Morley) – a follow-up to *Everyday Television: Nationwide* (Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley)
- 1981 *Screen*'s first 'TV issue'
- 1982 *Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video* (John Ellis; rev. edn, 1992)
 First mention of 'television studies' in *Cinema Journal* – in Jane Feuer's review of the BFI's 13th television monograph: *Coronation Street* (Richard Dyer, Christine Geraghty, Marion Jordan, Terry Lovell, Richard Paterson, John Stewart)
- 1984 First International Television Studies Conference (London); proceedings published as *Television in Transition* (Phillip Drummond and Richard Patterson, 1985)
Critical Studies in Mass Communication (Speech Communication Association; renamed *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2000)
 SCS's 'Film and Television' conference
-

Continued

-
- 1985 *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (Ien Ang)
- 1987 *Channels of Discourse* (Robert C. Allen; 'reassembled' edn, 1992)
Television Culture (John Fiske; second edition, 2011)
- 1989 *Television Studies: Textual Analysis* (Gary Burns and Robert J. Thompson)
Remote Control: Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power (Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner and Eva-Maria Warth)
 Console-ing Passions (board included Julie D'Acci, Jane Feuer, Mary Beth Haralovich, Lauren Rabinowitz and Lynn Spigel; first conference, 1992)
- 1991 *Screen Studies Conference* (*Screen*)
Television Criticism: Approaches and Applications (Leah R. Vande Berg and Lawrence A. Wenner);
 reworked 1998 as *Critical Approaches to Television* (Vande Berg, Wenner and Bruce E. Gronbeck; 2nd edn, 2004)
 Screen-L (online discussion group; not associated with *Screen*)
- 1992 *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (Henry Jenkins)
- 1993 The Internet Movie Database's website (based on its Usenet-collected data)
- 1994 *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (Jeremy G. Butler; 4th edn, 2012)
- 1995 *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television* (John Caldwell)
- 1996 DVD format introduced in Japan (US, 1997; Europe, 1998; Australia, 1999)
- 1998 *The Television Studies Book* (Christine Geraghty and David Lusted)
- 1999 *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (John Corner)
- 2000 *Television & New Media*
- 2001 *The Language of New Media* (Lev Manovich)
- 2002 *Television Studies: the Key Concepts* (Bernadette Casey, Neil Casey, Ben Calvert, Liam French and Justin Lewis)
Television Studies (Toby Miller)
- 2004 *The Television Studies Reader* (Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill)
An Introduction to Television Studies (Johnathan Bignell)
Flow (online journal)
- 2006 *Critical Studies in Television*
Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide (Henry Jenkins)
- 2008 *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (John Caldwell)
- 2009 *Television Studies After TV* (Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay)
- 2010 *Television Studies: the Basics* (Toby Miller)
-

Fig. 1. One of the low-resolution images captured by Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow for their *Screen* essay in 1977.



skipped over Heath and Skirrow's piece in order to read the 'Dossier on Melodrama' at the end of that issue.

The path to television studies for Seiter, Robert Allen, Jane Feuer, Christine Geraghty, Tania Modleski, Mimi White, myself, and many other first-generation television studies scholars often proceeded from auteurist studies of Sirk, to genre studies of melodrama, to more general interests in the serial narrative form, to the television soap opera and the positioning of its viewer. Modleski and Feuer were pioneers in this regard. The former's 'Notes on a feminine narrative form' in a 1979 issue of *Film Quarterly* and the latter's examination of 'Melodrama, serial form and television today' in a 1984 issue of *Screen* established the soap opera – that critically reviled television genre – as a crucial test case for an understanding of narrative on television and the positioning of its presumably female subject.¹¹ This was further consolidated in 1985 with the publication of Allen's *Speaking of Soap Operas*.¹² Thus the late 1970s and early 1980s were a critical time in the development of television studies in both the UK and the USA, and much of this activity swirled around the soap opera and feminist criticism. In fact the first mention of 'television studies' in SCMS's *Cinema Journal* was in Feuer's 1982 review of a BFI monograph on the British soap opera *Coronation Street*.¹³ 'Television studies' first appears in *Screen* in a pioneering comment in 1971 by Edward Buscombe about the SEFT Summer School: 'Everyone agreed, I think, that it was high time television studies were developed, and that next year's Summer School should be a much more ambitious programme on the same subject'.¹⁴

Broadly speaking, these authors applied new critical perspectives to television. These were soon codified into nine approaches/methods/disciplines by Allen's influential and eminently useful *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism*, which devotes individual chapters to semiotics, narrative theory, audience-oriented

11 Tania Modleski, 'The search for tomorrow in today's soap operas: notes on a feminine narrative form', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1979), pp. 12–21; Jane Feuer, 'Melodrama, serial form, and television today', *Screen*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1984), pp. 4–17.

12 Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

13 Jane Feuer, 'Review', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1982), pp. 55–60; a review of Richard Dyer (ed.), *Coronation Street* (London: British Film Institute, 1981).

14 Edward Buscombe, 'SEFT Summer School on television at Loughborough', *Screen* vol. 12, no. 2 (1971), pp. 119–20.

15 Robert C. Allen (ed.), *Channels of Discourse: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

criticism, genre study, ideological analysis, psychoanalysis, feminist criticism, British cultural studies and postmodernism.¹⁵ Initially published in 1987 and then ‘reassembled’ in 1992, almost every chapter of *Channels of Discourse* was written by an academic with a degree in film studies – including its editor, Allen, who received a PhD in film studies from the University of Iowa in 1977. The broad assortment of topics was unified by one premiss: they did *not* take a quantitative, empirical approach to television. The reason for this opposition to empiricism was simple. Quantitative approaches to the media – known as ‘mass communication’ research in the USA – had dominated television scholarship until the 1980s. In 1985 Allen’s *Speaking of Soap Operas* directly challenged the form of empirical research advocated by mass communication studies and his *Channels of Discourse* offered a guidebook to alternative approaches to television. It was immediately embraced by those of us wishing to think of television in new, critical ways, informed by what we had learned in studying the cinema.

A certain form of numbers-based empiricism was rejected by these approaches, but, as the *Channels of Discourse* chapter on ‘British cultural studies’ suggests, 1980s television studies was not wholly resistant to empirical study of real viewers and their actual responses to television. In fact, as the decade began, Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley were publishing the results of their ethnographic study of the *Nationwide* news magazine programme’s audience.¹⁶ The *Nationwide* study introduced many television studies scholars, especially those in the USA, to the work of Stuart Hall and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. The key difference between the CCCS’s ethnographic work and the empirical approach of mass communication researchers of the time was that the former sought to understand the meanings and discursive structures employed by viewers, while the latter quantified who was watching what, when, and what effect it had upon them. Although not embraced by all television studies scholars, this form of discursive analysis remains an important part of the discipline and has recently been extended from the discourses of the viewers to the discourses of the creators of television, forming the basis for the recent development of ‘production studies’.

Although it is dangerous to generalize, US television scholars’ roots in second-wave feminism encouraged them to see politics in the personal, in television’s construction of the subject. In short, US television studies originated in sexual politics. It did not have the strong sociological tradition and the awareness of cultural politics that shaped much of the CCCS’s work. Modleski, for example, is concerned with the individual feminine viewer’s engagement with soap opera. In contrast, Brunsdon and Morley analyze the position of television within the public sphere – how it contributes to the public understanding of, and discourse surrounding, contemporary issues (including the structure of the family). Some decades later, Caughie bears the legacy of Brunsdon and Morley’s work and consequently he is moved to a state of mourning by both the waning of ‘a

16 Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley, *Everyday Television: Nationwide* (London: British Film Institute, 1978); David Morley, *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* (London: British Film Institute, 1980). See also David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992).

- 17 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 421.

- 18 See Amanda D. Lotz and Jostein Gripsrud (eds), *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context* (London: Routledge, 2010); Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (eds), *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (eds), *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era* (London: Routledge, 2009).

- 19 Gary Burns and Robert J. Thompson (eds), *Television Studies: Textual Analysis* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1989).

- 20 Jeremy Butler, *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994). 4th edn to be published by Routledge, 2012.

- 21 David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: an Introduction* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); subsequent editions published by McGraw-Hill.

particular public space for television' and, more generally, by 'television's part in the waning of the public sphere'.¹⁷ Caughie's essay examines ways in which UK television can enrich the public sphere and an integral part of his elegy is a lament over how rarely this currently occurs. His disappointment may illuminate another difference between UK and US broadcasting. From the days of radio onward, the British government has held broadcasters to a higher standard of public service than the US government has. The BBC has always been expected to enhance the public sphere in ways that ABC, CBS and NBC, and their local affiliates, were barely called upon to do. And the optimistically named Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was never more than a poor relation to the higher rated, market-driven networks. Thus Caughie mourns a form of television that seldom exists in US broadcasting. When US television scholars such as Lotz write about – and some current authors even elegize – the demise of 'television', they are referring to the commercial networks' inability to sustain their dominance of the system.¹⁸ It is clear to all, of course, that they have not dominated that system through the pure philanthropic enrichment of the public sphere.

From Williams's 'flow' to Allen's *Channels of Discourse*, 1974 to 1987 were the formative years of television studies. Its present, still vaguely defined, contours may be discerned in the scholarly work done on television at the time. And much as film studies had managed to do in the late 1960s and 1970s, television studies began to be taught in colleges and universities in the 1980s, but as the 1990s began there was still no 'introduction to television studies' textbook. For that matter, there had been only one book published with the phrase 'television studies' in its title – Gary Burns and Robert J. Thompson's anthology, *Television Studies: Textual Analysis*.¹⁹ Frustrated by the lack of a television studies textbook, I wrote my own in 1994; but television studies was still so amorphous that it never occurred to me to include the phrase in the title. In fact, I had hoped to call it *Reading Between the Scan Lines*, but the publisher declared that to be too obscure and demanded the rather mundane *Television: Critical Methods and Applications*.²⁰ It would be immodest of me to ruminate on the impact of this textbook, but I can say that my goal was to provide an alternative to then-standard textbooks stressing industry history, ratings-dominated audience research, and mass communication effects, policy and law. I also aspired to create the television studies counterpart to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's *Film Art*.²¹ In my efforts to provide students with a toolbox full of analytical implements for understanding television's signification process I drew heavily upon the principles underlying Heath and Skirrow's *World in Action* piece, which appeared in *Screen* just two years before *Film Art*'s first edition and upon whose methodology I personally had come to rely heavily in the 1980s. Much like Bordwell, Thompson, Heath and Skirrow, I sought to 'stop' a visual text in order to analyze the work it did in signifying meaning.

I suspect Caughie might not approve of the approach I take. He mourns the time when *Screen*'s engagement with television waxed political. He

22 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 417.

23 Ibid., p. 418.

misses the 1980s, when '*Screen* most closely resembled a campaigning journal': 'theoretical critique was not only intended to expose television in its programmes but to make it better, to make it other than it was – more open, more diverse, more independent, more radically experimental'.²² Explaining why he is pessimistically drawn to elegy, he essentially describes the approach taken by *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* and much contemporary television studies:

an academic fascination with the phenomenon of television *as it is* and the description of its many forms *as they are* seems so often (but not always) to have replaced that ethical and political engagement with the possibilities of a different television.²³

Caughie's qualifying 'but not always' alludes to the diversity that is television studies in the 2010s. The abundance of scholarly monographs, textbooks, blogs and online journals and services devoted to television studies since 1989 – not to mention at least eight books with 'television studies' in their titles – suggests that no elegy, and certainly no eulogy, is necessary.

Perhaps I am less pessimistic than Caughie because US television studies never had a period where a journal successfully campaigned to change television; I have never expected television studies to have that sort of influence. However, I find the 'phenomenon of television *as it is*' to be endlessly fascinating in a time of great institutional change – a fragmenting and proliferation of The Television Screen and The Cinema Screen into the multitudinous screens that viewers/users/consumers experience in the digital age. Moreover, that age affords the television studies scholar an array of resources for analyzing the medium. In the dark days before videocassettes, box sets and simplified recording, television was far more ephemeral than the cinema. Programmes were rarely archived in a format accessible to researchers. Some, like soap operas, were not archived at all. Today's DVDs, Blu-ray discs and video downloads allow one the pleasure and the power of examining and reexamining television texts, drilling down to individual frames, if need be, to assess their meanings and beauties. And innovative programmes



Fig. 2. A typical high-definition frame capture from a download of *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-).

like the BBC's *Occupation* (upon which Caughie ruminates) and AMC's *Mad Men* reward that close examination with insights into their signifying processes – as is suggested by a frame capture from a high-definition *Mad Men* download (figure 2; contrast its quality with figure 1). Such programmes may even participate in a waxing of the public sphere, the decline of which prompted Caughie's elegy. Further, the researching of contemporary and historical texts has been greatly accelerated and enhanced by online databases of television cast and crew information (such as the Internet Movie Database) and searchable, full-text archives of journals. (How else could one find, as I did, *Screen*'s and *Cinema Journal*'s first uses of the phrase 'television studies' in a matter of seconds?) I suspect that, whatever television and television studies become in the future, their histories and *Screen*'s contributions to those histories have equipped scholars with the methodological apparatus necessary to dissect television's new signifying practices and keep faith with its new, recalcitrant, disorderly indiscipline.

The medium in crisis: Caughie, Brunsdon and the problem of US television

JASON JACOBS

The sense of an ending seems to be inherent to the problem of cultural overproduction, caught up in the thought that value itself cannot withstand the dilution of quality by quantity. Cormac McCarthy's musing implies that the fact that we ever could discern value was a historical accident, a blip in the future plenitude of washed-out mediocrity:

I don't know what of our culture is going to survive, or if we survive. If you look at the Greek plays, they're really good. And there's just a handful of them. Well, how good would they be if there were 2,500 of them? But that's the future looking back at us. Anything you can think of, there's going to be millions of them. Just the sheer number of things will devalue them. I don't care whether it's art, literature, poetry or drama, whatever. The sheer volume of it will wash it out. I mean, if you had thousands of Greek plays to read, would they be that good? I don't think so.¹

It might also imply that we can no longer order our ideas of achievement and failure with any coherent prospect of tutelage.

Reading John Caughie's essay, 'Mourning television: the other screen', one is immediately struck by a similar, pervasive sense of a crisis of authority in the face of a dangerously proliferating medium. This is exemplified in an early paragraph that riffs on television's dialectic of degradation and augmentation:

¹ Cormac McCarthy, quoted in John Jurgenson, 'Hollywood's favorite cowboy', *Wall Street Journal*, 20 November 2009. <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704576204574529703577274572.html>> accessed 14 September 2011.

- 2 John Caughie, 'Mourning television: the other screen', *Screen*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2010), p. 411.

I am ... increasingly struck by how many conversations among those of us who are committed to theorizing and teaching television are now inflected by some sense of loss: whether it be the loss of a 'seriousness' in which television actually matters; of a 'popularity' which is not simply obedient to the market; the fading possibilities of a different television which seemed to open in the UK with Channel 4; or the waning of an object of study which has simply been overwhelmed by too many texts – too many texts for the discipline of television studies to discipline; too many texts and too many carriers of texts. On the one hand, in academic teaching many of us seem to be feeling the loss of the object of study: television has become unruly, almost unteachable. On the other hand, perhaps it is precisely this recalcitrance, this disorderliness, that draws us to television studies and makes it worth keeping the faith with its indiscipline.²

Framing the erosion of stability in this way foregrounds the peculiarity of the medium and therefore begs a question: has something so special happened to this form of culture that there is something inappropriate in substituting the words 'book', 'film' or 'music' – all of which have been also subject to change, even transformation, thanks to similar industrial and technological forces? The wordplay around 'discipline', however, is no joke here. There is, I take it, a crisis of authority at stake; not for the first time television is seen as an impulsive infant, running beyond the grasp of those who would seek to put it to better use. For Caughie, television is undergoing a fundamental erasure of its objecthood as a medium, making it ungraspable, perhaps unteachable. My estimation of the medium (in similarly broad terms) is the complete opposite to Caughie's. Since his piece was written in the spirit of looking back over *Screen*'s contribution to television studies, it might be illuminating to view what I take to underpin some aspects of his characterization through the lens of a piece from two decades ago, which for me exemplified the very best work on television that the journal offered.

Charlotte Brunsdon's essay 'Problems with quality' appeared in 1990 in the first issue published by Oxford University Press of the relaunched journal – the one with the image of Warhol kneeling next to Hitchcock on its cover.³ It was written during another time of rapid change and crisis, the apparent deregulation (although it was more like re-regulation) of broadcasting in the UK. The specific prompting for the essay was the discussion surrounding the British government's 1988 White Paper, 'Competition, Choice and Quality', and Brunsdon's ambition in relation to this was to work up some language, missing or diminished in media and cultural studies, with which to get to grips with the notion of quality hitherto dominated by what she characterizes as 'conservative discourses about quality'.⁴ As many have subsequently noted, the power of that essay derives from its opening up of the matter of value in relation to television, especially the various non-explicit ways in which judgements about value tend to be

- 3 Charlotte Brunsdon, 'Problems with quality', *Screen*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), pp. 67-90.

- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

anchored to institutional and structural factors inside and outside the academy.

In order to do this, Brunsdon makes two key moves which have become typical in subsequent writing about the medium. The first is to invalidate those evaluative approaches to television which are vitiated by a prior involvement in the assessment of other art forms:

The consequences of simply annexing film and television to traditional aesthetic discourse is to do extraordinary violence to any inclusive understanding of the media. This is the case, for example, when television is reduced to its plays and literary adaptations, and subjected to a sort of sub-literary criticism.⁵

⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

The case is that the newness of the media and their more prominent technological and industrial infrastructure make them an inappropriate object of those 'traditional' discourses, and that in any case such discourses must bend to the transformative impact of the arrival of these new cultural forms. This leads to the second move, which is the characterization of the medium itself. It is important that this discussion happens under the shadow of proposed state legislation because it gives Brunsdon's argument an immediate instrumental spin. The quality debate 'must be joined' because 'it is through debate and institutionalization of ideas in, for instance, laws and courses, that ideas of quality are established'.⁶ She proposes the 'promotion of variety and diversity as the single most important principle to extend and preserve', in terms of programme output, schedules and audiences; this may require policy that protects some programme forms from market exposure 'in ways that are not paternalistic'. This defence of the overall provision of the public broadcasting service schedule makes sense in the light of her characterization of the medium as a thoroughly socialized, everyday place of making judgements where viewers, borrowing a concept from Barbara Herrnstein Smith, draw on a 'folk-relativism' in relation to quality in ways that are 'highly context bound and radically contingent'.⁷

⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 75-77.

The context here is the present tense of a national television schedule: it takes what was then – and probably still is, for a lot of viewers – a common way of watching television and projects this schedule-like essence backwards to produce a sense of the medium as ineluctably immediate, social and contingent. This sense of the specificity of the medium as everyday is essential in shielding it from 'traditional aesthetic discourses' that tend to value distance from the ordinary and routine. In speaking to this nationally specific context, Brunsdon is drawing on both a policy and an intellectual position. The policy components implied by her promotion of diversity and variety in broadcasting can be located in key aspects of the Annan Report but also – slightly less prominently – in the more modernist inflected idea of 'the possibilities of the medium' wherein good television exploits or extends or otherwise deploys capacities specific to it, which characterizes the Pilkington Report.⁸ This latter notion inhabits her approving account of Raymond Williams's television criticism which, as

⁸ 'The Pilkington and Annan Reports were the published findings of state committees, from 1962 and 1977 respectively, investigating the future of broadcasting in the UK. John Caughie offers a useful summary of their character in *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 79-87, 184-91.

9 Brunson, 'Problems with quality', pp. 82-86.

10 As well as complaining about George Brandt's characterization of the 'Brideshead in the Crown' section as a 'recipe', Brunson offers a much more explicit defence of public service broadcasting in the section that introduces the reprint of this essay, in her *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 105-11.

11 Though this is not the place, in order to truly open up the debate about television and value it is necessary to challenge the territoriality of the insistence on the everydayness of the medium, to moderate claims for 'specificity', and to highlight the ways in which its boundaries have been regularly policed by the repeated hygienic exclusion of approaches from the wider critical repertoire of screen studies, as well as humanities as a whole.

12 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 416.

13 Brunson's essay was followed in that issue by William Boddy, 'Alternative television in the United States', *Screen*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), pp. 91-101. When read in order of printing these provide a fine introduction to two of the best writers of scholarly analysis at that time.

14 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 416.

Brunson notes, combines a realist and modernist aesthetic which 'demands that form follow function and that television develop its own specificity'; and has a presence in her account of *Brideshead Revisited* (Granada, 1981) and *Jewel in the Crown* (Granada, 1984), where it is claimed that that they are 'formally unchallenging' because they merely relay 'already established taste codes of literature, theatre, interior decoration, interpersonal relationships and nature ... their only specifically televisual demand is that the viewer switch on at the right time and watch'.⁹ Brunson has subsequently complained that her account of how the discursive contexts of quality at the time functioned in the promotion and construction of drama – she uses the synecdoche 'Brideshead in the Crown' – was taken up as a 'recipe' for quality ('Literary sources', 'The Best of British Acting', 'Money' and 'Heritage export').¹⁰ However, this section of the essay does feel like the description of a commercial brand, or the formula for a mass-produced product. Indeed the very essence of its contemptuous tone inheres in the distance between this and the earlier modernist and pluralist characterization of the medium – there is something distasteful about the way British products are made and sold in this way.

Despite its tentative, exploratory nature, its discursive openness and its sincerely meant and deeply resonant conclusion ('Judgments are being made – let's talk about them'), what is striking about this piece is its eloquent confidence. Brunson is *sure* that television as a medium can be encompassed by the terms she sets out.¹¹ It is one example of what Caughie calls 'the forms of engagement between *Screen* and television' which have been 'very particular to the UK'.¹² Indeed Brunson's essay is absolutely unconcerned with the medium beyond its national borders, which is why its demand to 'talk about' value is exportable (and indeed was taken up internationally), while its argument for state regulatory guarantees to restrain the market was not.¹³ In reflecting on the potency of *Screen*'s publications on television, Caughie argues that 'it is precisely their local specificity which has been important in defining a particular mode of engagement in television studies, and has raised the level of theory's ambition to make a difference'.¹⁴ By framing the issue of aesthetics and value as anchored to national and cultural policy rather than individual programmes, sensitivity or temperament, Brunson's essay was emblematic of *Screen*'s repeated privileging of collective responses to immediate matters of significance. It responsibly worries about the national future. But one cost of this is that the universalizing opportunities of thinking about aesthetics, those that offer the general rather than the specific as points of comparison, tend to be throttled back in favour of the particular, the national and the local. We get a very municipal sense of the medium.

I have dwelt on Brunson's essay rather than responding directly to Caughie because it captures how at that time a theoretical concern with defining and thinking about the medium was absolutely bound to, but also in tension with, a cultural nationalist engagement with television policy

- 15 John Caughie, 'Adorno's reproach: repetition, difference and television genre', *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1991), pp. 127-53, and 'Playing at being American', in Patricia Mellencamp (ed.), *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (London: British Film Institute, 1990). The earlier work I am thinking of is Caughie's attempt to map the different economy of dramatic look and forms of identification in television drama, in 'Rhetoric, pleasure and "Art Television": *Dreams of Leaving*', *Screen*, vol. 22, no. 4 (1981), pp. 9-31.

during the 1990s. Caughie's own work at this time was an equally confident if theoretically thickened attempt to grasp the medium across the larger structures of its discursive and textual behaviours. In 'Adorno's reproach: repetition, difference and television genre', published a year after Brunsdon's essay, he continued and extended the delineation of medium-specific features of television that occupied some of his earlier work. In this essay, and the slightly earlier 'Playing at being American: games and tactics',¹⁵ we see the introduction of many of the terms that will dominate his writing over the next two decades: televisual versions of irony, distance and detachment; the ineluctability of interruptability; the specifics of the medium in national and local forms; the limits of value; the assertion that television cannot hold the viewer or be loved as cinema. In these early pieces, if I grasp them correctly, he is working towards a notion of television which, by his lights, can in various ways resist the deep illusionism of involvement, the seductions of immediate and easy emotion. I mention the difficulty in comprehension because his prose style thickens and complicates theory, and always seems in pursuit of the unstable, the troubling, that which will tilt a settled society or aesthetic or view in surprising ways. The organizing thought in 'Playing at being American', for example, attempts to counter what seems to be the universalizing tendencies of US scholarship about television at that time, which, he argues, tended to conflate postmodernism and television and thereby universalized its properties. As a counter to this, Caughie writes about various specificities of encounters between the local and the global:

The insistence on the national or the local in any of its forms, prefers, if only as a possibility, difference and diversity to indifference and mere plurality. The continual return to locality, whether it be of nation, race, class, gender or generation, resists the easy rationality of a general category or a universal theory. It is conscious of a less systematic specificity, to be determined by local readings of texts and conditions and histories and objectives, and it proposes a politics which is not guaranteed by textuality or by natural resistance but it is open to historical conditions. For television, these conditions are, in their turn, enmeshed in the expectations, aspirations, and possibilities produced by particular histories of broadcasting and by particular legal, commercial, and political arrangements of regulation and deregulation.¹⁶

- 16 Caughie, 'Playing at being American', pp. 56-57.

The particularism of this conception of television explains Caughie's claims in 'Mourning television' that television might be amenable to the critical thinking found in *Screen*: 'While Hollywood was unlikely to be shaken by the intervention of film theory, there always seems to be the possibility that in television someone might just be listening'.¹⁷ Of course this only counts if one is talking about television outside of the US context, since most of its television is, and almost always has been, made in Hollywood. What is significant is, as we shall see, his

- 17 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 416.

18 I offer an account of Caughie's theory of interruptability and its likely longevity in the digital environment, in Jason Jacobs, 'Television, interrupted: pollution or aesthetic?', in James Bennett and Niki Strange (eds), *Television as Digital Media* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

19 I am surprised by the insistence – useful in its place – on the industrial provenance of 'quality drama', its target demographic, and its textual bait attracting those with high cultural capital. All of this may be true, but it hardly exhausts or replaces our interest in genuinely artistic value which may or may not also exist.

20 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 418.

21 Ibid., p. 150.

introduction of a historical as well as a geographical anchor to medium specificity. I am not concerned with challenging or rehearsing the details of his theoretical development, rich and complex as it is, but rather to track something which, as in Brunsdon's essay, shadow-steps alongside it, eventually emerging in 'Mourning television' as a 'structuring absence', to use an antiquated notion.¹⁸ This 'something' is the achievement of US television drama since the early 1990s, and the ways in which it has transformed and revealed, in the light of many critical accounts, television's capacity to produce art. Of course, since achievement locates value in specific instances rather than the social and cultural utility of the medium in general, such assertions tend to be lists of shows; and many have argued that such shows are industrially designed precisely to elicit responses that recruit the critical language and traditional aesthetic discourses of the elite humanities.¹⁹ Equally, critical approbation which may be a passing fashion should not automatically imply value or justify attention: just because Clive James and Toril Moi write about *Mad Men* does not mean that the show has to matter to us. That said, paying scholarly attention to a genre and a form that is already privileged does not necessarily mean that others will be neglected or deprived of attention. To object in these terms seems to me to offer a socialized and psychological version of the medium as a thing requiring the therapeutic gaze of the scholar in order to acquire validity. I was struck while reading 'Mourning television' by the scant acknowledgement of the incredible amplitude of approbation directed towards US drama in ways that make it possible to distinguish within the 'too much' of television. Perhaps these privileged forms do not 'need' the help of our critical attention, whether they deserve it or not. Indeed, whatever one thinks of the real or confected nature of such achievement, the fact that this fairly limited number of shows has attracted particular critical attention has at least made it easier to identify the bits of television that one ought to attend (or resist attending) to. For those of us who admire them, it is important to attend to them precisely so that they receive the kind of critical scrutiny that will allow us to mature our collective powers of discrimination and criticism. Distinctions are there to be made between, for example, the vapid complexity of *Lost* and the eloquent moral simplicity of *Breaking Bad*.

My case, then, is that a certain strain of cultural nationalism inflects Caughie's account of what he calls, in an echo of Raymond Williams's encounter with US flow, the 'monstrous accumulation of television'.²⁰ As I have noted, there is already an irritation with the universalizing tendencies of US television scholarship expressed in 'Playing at being American'; in 'Adorno's reproach' he locates the dynamism of US television genres in the industrial appetite for difference, since individual instances of genre are scheduled in competition (a kind of Darwinian adaptation comes to mind here), but immediately remarks that 'the subversion of conventions is becoming conventional' (when has it not?).²¹ In this piece Caughie is not as broadly reformist as Brunsdon – there is a characteristic deflation of expectation as he argues that there is little room

22 Ibid., p. 152.

to negate the 'logic of commodification'²² beyond a modest playfulness that deploys – in this essay – irony and parody in ways that unsettle rather than defeat or overturn that logic. One can see the same alternation between a depiction of the powerful force (sometimes 'commodification', sometimes – following Adorno – 'administrative rationality'; often the word 'logics' will precede a particularly formidable oppressive notion) and the gentler, smaller forms of (one hesitates to use the word, but the idea is of the same species) resistance, usually located textually rather than as an attribute of the viewer.

One of the problems with the success of US television drama, particularly in its present form, is that does not exemplify the preferred aspects of the medium that have characterized a strand of British television studies over the past decades – its socially and nationally embedded everydayness. As others have noted, the consumption of the DVD box set is a prominently commodified version of consumption that, for some, is not really 'television' at all. Of course this is not peculiar to US television, but what seems perhaps irritatingly familiar about its success is the way it is able to take quite local stories and specifically national histories and find universal resonances that connect strongly to a culturally diverse range of global audiences: that, after all, is the history of *Dallas*.²³ What is different is the artistic altitude that has been claimed for it. Industrial promotion and market domination have to be built on a felt relationship to a preferred object: the market may amplify – perhaps in distorting ways – consumer selection, but ultimately it cannot determine our attention or the regularity of our appetites, outside a schedule, for 'just one more' episode. There has to be some quality inherent in the object. What seems to me to be particularly worthy of further investigation is the way that such US dramas from the early 1990s onwards have incorporated a nationally specific kind of anxiety, a deep introspection (which has in various ways always characterized US literature, but in *this* way specifically postwar literature).²⁴ It is the kind of achievement that, as we know from other cultural forms, tends to give the work a life beyond the time and place of its making. And this is the essence of cultural value. It is its distinction; the way in which, unlike other forms of value, artworks may accrue it precisely through their persistence beyond the time and place of their making and their continuing relevance to audiences distant from their immediate concerns. In earlier times we might have called this 'absorption into a tradition'; instead I suspect we are seeing the establishment of one. This is what the past fifteen years or so of US drama have offered us: a serious engagement with cultural, historical and political matters beyond the 'relentless spectacle of the present'. Some, like *Deadwood* and *Boardwalk Empire*, adopt the mode of costume drama, while others appear beneath the canopy of contemporary relevance but, like *Rebel Without a Cause*, offer shadow narratives which point to far deeper, cosmic concerns.²⁵ *Breaking Bad* appears to be a recession narrative about a teacher who chooses to manufacture drugs in order to pay for his medical costs, but it regularly exposes the moral tension between the cost

23 Donald Sassoon gives a fine history of the waxing and waning of US television fiction in Europe in *The Culture of the Europeans: From 1800 to the Present* (London: Harper Press, 2006), pp.1183-99.

24 Amy Hungerford's fascinating account of postwar US literature offers one potentially productive point of comparison, especially in terms of thematic overlap between prose fiction and long form television in their figuring of alienation and belief, in *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion Since 1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

25 I am thinking of George Wilson's account of that film in his *Narration in Light: Studies in Cinematic Point of View* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 166-90.

and rewards of individual enterprise on the society under erosion by a corporate narcotics industry that provides its central stimulating energy. Like *The Wire*, it explores the implacable shredding of human subjectivity by modernity not by rejecting the commercial or mercantile instinct but by exploring its deepest foundations in the desire to nurture, thrive and adapt. Shows like this are worthy companions to those works of cinema and literature that we admire for their deep artistry, their ability to speak to us across time, their ability to articulate as well as bear the burden of human significance. To say that *Deadwood* survives credible comparison in, say, its cosmic imagery to Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, or in its language to Melville's *Billy Budd*, or in its entanglement with philosophical relationship between Law and Desire with *Measure for Measure*, is not to fall under the spell of the packaging. It is an attempt to find the critical terms with which to describe the works we admire rather than a bid for inclusion in an already hallowed canon. Accepting that we can acknowledge and think about works of, dare I say, genius surely does not mean that we *necessarily* reject everything else from our orbit of attention?

Brundson anticipates and rejects such an approach in a fascinating way. In 'Is television studies history?' she argues that, for a variety of historical reasons, UK television studies scholars have been deficient ('noticeably inadequate') in their defence of public service broadcasting, to some extent (the tone, to my ears, implies a neglectful dereliction of duty) preferring the 'transatlantic romance' with US television drama, noting the significant publications around the export of US quality dramas that draw on 'aesthetic/humanities paradigms'.²⁶ I suppose a view of description as inert when compared to the energetic creation of new conceptualizations of the field might look askance at yet another account of the same text. But do we really want to forgo the richness of descriptive accuracy, the persuasive illumination of the appropriate construction of words which capture our experience (I am thinking of the writing about film by George Toles, Victor Perkins and William Rothman, among others)? I doubt whether we have even remotely enough of that in television studies. Is it really so wrong-headed to suggest that even posing such questions represents an inappropriate gesture towards a medium that just does not suit them? Brundson manoeuvres around the fact that anchoring television to the specificity of the everyday is being eroded by digital formats that dislocate television from the schedules. She argues for a historical specificity that situates the flourishing of aesthetic innovation within a system nourished by the healthy presence of public service broadcasting, citing Caughie's work on television drama in support of this assertion. Her claims that the history of the BBC is 'rather more varied, complex and contradictory than was sometimes assumed' seems to be another way in which a preferred pluralist criterion is privileged in an account of the medium, but which tends to diminish those forms of attention and means of accounting for achievement that do not share the interests of the reformist priorities of contemporary cultural studies.²⁷

26 Charlotte Brundson, 'Is television studies history?', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2008), p. 131.

27 One might note a growing tendency in this wing of the field to attack celebratory accounts of audience activity that grant them too much autonomy and agency. In the same issue as 'Problems with quality', James Donald's review of John Fiske's *Television Culture* reveals that overactive audiences might be a problem: 'No need to reform television, then. The People's "resistive" viewing habits mean that "cultural democracy" exists already. All the radical media theorist needs to do is pat them on the head.' *Screen*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), p. 116. The impetus for reform is, by definition, a deficit in television which audiences and the market are inadequately equipped to deal with. Equally, such a stance feeds back into a view of the medium itself.

²⁸ It is worth noting that both Caughie and Brunson have written eloquent accounts of particular television shows in the BFI's TV Classics series: John Caughie, *Edge of Darkness* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007), Charlotte Brunson, *Law and Order* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2010).

²⁹ Brunson, 'Is television history?', p. 134. Brunson makes a similar move in 'Television criticism and the transformation of the archive', *Television and New Media*, vol. 10, no. 58 (2009), p. 30, where she discusses the erosion of the 'constitutive connections between medium and nation'.

When the medium and the field are characterized in this tactical and territorial way there may well be a chilling effect on those of us who still wish to locate ourselves within television studies but find the terms of membership ever more exclusive.²⁸ British cultural nationalists and public service broadcasting defenders have to come to terms with the fact that the emphatically commercial US system has produced some outstanding achievements in fiction (alongside, of course, a massive amount of lesser material). And while I agree with Brunson that the history of British television and broadcasting in general is 'particularly rich', I am uncomfortable with the idea that that history be recruited to narrowly nationalist ends.²⁹

I find it particularly difficult to articulate these criticisms, since the work of Caughie, and Brunson has provided a cynosure for my own thinking about television for over twenty years. I do not doubt that it is I, rather than they, who have moved further from the traditional concerns of that strand of television studies which sees the medium as a fundamentally national thing. And contrary to McCarthy and Caughie, I do not think more implies less. Television at the moment – particularly US television drama – is more interesting, more valuable than ever. Thanks to the shiny package of the box set that liberates it from national schedules, we can watch to see how it responds to the critical pressure and illumination it so deserves.

Lost in participation

HELEN PIPER

In a keynote address to the most recent London Film Festival, the veteran film and television director Ken Loach rehearsed two not altogether unfamiliar complaints: one that managerial and editorial controls at the BBC are stifling creative agency and expression; the other that British television has manifestly failed to live up to early expectations.

'Television began with such high hopes. It was going to be the national theatre of the air. It was going to really be a place where society could have a national discourse, and they've reduced it to a grotesque reality game.'¹

It is timely then that John Caughie's recent essay, 'Mourning television: the other screen',² should commence with an observation as to how a sense of loss has also lately inflected academic discourses and conversations about television. He reminds us that writers for *Screen* once sought to intervene in television practice as well as theory, apparently inviting a debate which could again contribute to the collective imagination of 'a different television', not least by identifying the 'other possibilities of meaning and engagement' it might yet offer. Mindful of my description of his earlier expression of regret for 'serious drama',³ Caughie takes care to distance his perspective from one of nostalgia, and concludes with the observation that television theorizing needs to continue to work through a particular lost dimension, 'the loss of a public space, television's part in the waning of the public sphere'.⁴ The drama *Occupation* (BBC, 2009) is cited to compare present with past, an eloquent demonstration of how even a hard-hitting serial that engages with issues of national controversy is today more likely to provoke private affect than political and collective debate. It is an example that dovetails quite neatly with his earlier citations of scholarship that functioned as

¹ Ken Loach, keynote address to the London Film Festival, 14 October 2010.

² John Caughie, 'Mourning television: the other screen', *Screen*, vol. 51, no 4 (2010), pp. 410–21.

³ In this he is prompted explicitly by the 'provocation' of the phrase 'penning an elegy' that I previously used in reference to his work. See Helen Piper, 'Reality TV, *Wife Swap* and the drama of banality', *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 4 (2004), p. 273.

⁴ Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 421.

intervention, thus imbricating radical practice and effect alongside radical academic writing, all dimensions of a period of lost possibility.

In drawing a parallel between Loach's speech and Caughie's essay my intention is not to reduce the complexity or object of either argument, but in both accounts the expression of television's lost possibility seems to be bound up with the memory of very particular modes of agency, impact and public discourse. I should acknowledge here that Caughie's memory is implied rather than explicit, expressed in the context of an exhaustive historical retrospective of *Screen* essays that address television. That said, conventional historiographic work in itself tends not to prompt feelings of loss comparable to those in which memory plays an active role, partly because of the rigour of the methodology and partly because history works to contextualize the past within an explanatory causal narrative. Engaging memory in contemplation of the past can make present absence more prominent; the framework of memory is not linear and the comparison can jar. However, it is precisely because memory is thus affective that it can also complement conventional historiography in important ways; as Susannah Radstone argues, its very form may be illuminating due to its particular 'relation to lived historical experience'.⁵

My response to Caughie's argument is not to contest the need to 'mourn' but to suggest that the process be extended to encompass the everyday relationship that television, like memory, bears to 'lived historical experience'. Although it should always have one eye to the future, what Andreas Huyssen has called 'productive remembering' does not necessarily need to feed into direct action by way of response.⁶ Simply working through loss can also, ultimately, sharpen one's understanding of the here and now. The canonical achievements and high-profile controversies of television's past comprise only the most visible tip of its significant, public cultural role, which routinely extended to the everyday affective and social practices of 'watching the box'. Such practices have changed profoundly, but incrementally, as the transformed and transformative landscape of daily television continually reestablishes itself as familiar. In this respect archive footage can function as a collective memory, prompting a confrontation with the past and its chasmic distance from the present. Is it fanciful to suggest that something similar also occurs in scholarship, perhaps when we use terminology such as 'liveness', 'flow', 'witness', 'immediacy', even 'agency'? These are all words that feature prominently in the lexicon of television studies as they have been used to map the contours of the television viewing experience, sometimes in reference to 'essential' characteristics and often in a way that belies their contingency. Deployment and redeployment of these terms in television scholarship requires a constant renegotiation of the past and present dimensions of the viewing experience in order to maintain the currency of the vocabulary.

I shall explore briefly two such overlapping instances of slippage in terminology as a means of sketching a perspective that will clearly differ from the one articulated by Caughie, although it too will be concerned

⁵ Susannah Radstone, 'Working with memory: an introduction', in Susannah Radstone (ed.), *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 1–21.

⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) p. 27.

with the role and possibility of television within the public sphere. Instead I address the altered landscape of daily television experience, initially through the equally altered coinage of ‘immediacy’ and ‘liveness’. The shifting contours of both vocabulary and experience may be seen to mask a disappearing public dimension of television that has been defined by its routine and familiar collective address, as well as the sense of inclusion this has engendered and the impact it has afforded to particular programmes, genres and scheduled time slots. In addition, I revisit certain ideals of radical agency that have assumed, and indeed depended upon, this impact, the apparent demise of which seems to have prompted the most recent interventions by Caughie and Loach. By way of example I confine my discussion to two series selected from any number of aptly demonstrative programmes from the current British terrestrial schedule. The first of these is *Seven Days* (Channel 4, 2010), the most recent ‘reality’ serial produced by Stephen Lambert, producer of *Wife Swap* (Channel 4, 2004–10), *Faking It* (Channel 4, 2000–06), and many others. In selecting this programme my intention is not to provoke a value opposition to Caughie’s choice of text or to his broader critical interest in serious modes of drama (an interest that I share). As I hope will become apparent, my purpose is to explore how new forms of audience participation seem to be consciously displacing older modes of viewer engagement with issues of public interest, and further to suggest that this is part of a larger paradigm shift in the forms of public discourse and an increasing diffusion of both the modes and ambitions of cultural ‘agency’. As I argued previously in relation to *Wife Swap*,⁷ public discourses about reality television have been nothing if not heated, although in theme, tone and political objective these have been very different to those that once surrounded serious drama.

Seven Days takes the form of a docusoap and approximates a form of weekly ‘real time’, promising to show social interactions and events in the day-to-day lives of a selected group of residents of London’s Notting Hill that have ‘just happened’, as each episode comprises material filmed in the previous seven days. Crucially a degree of interactivity is built in, with viewers invited to tell characters in the show what they think of them and to ‘advise’ them what to do next by posting comments via a range of social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Channel 4’s official ‘ChatNav’ service on its website.⁸ The conceit of this particular show is that these comments inform what is seen on air, with the explicit promise to viewers that ‘you’ll see the characters on TV reacting to, and in some cases acting on, your postings’.⁹ As this is also a busy part of London whose resident population is daily swollen by those who shop, work and socialize there, the format is deliberately open for any passers-by to intervene in the lives of the ‘cast’.

Several instances of direct disruption to the profilmic event are retained for broadcast, including an incident in the second episode when the participants Samantha and Laura are interrupted whilst eating in a local cafe by a woman who demands ‘is this what you two are really like?’ An

7 Piper, ‘Reality TV, *Wife Swap* and the drama of banality’, p. 273.

8 See <<http://sevendays.channel4.com/>> All cited editorial and postings from this website last accessed 25 November 2010.

9 Ibid.

awkward altercation follows, the two regular characters' selfconsciousness exacerbated by their sedentary arrangement at a fixed cafe table, and the need for them to turn repeatedly away from the camera to respond to the other customer and then back again to keep their faces in occasional view. It is typical of the sort of spontaneous minor conflict that has become a defining characteristic of the reality genre, and in this instance it presumably made the final cut because it underpins the ambition of the series to weave itself into the everyday life of the community.

Seven Days has been on air during the same period as *The Only Way Is Essex* (ITV2 2010-), another docusoap set within a select geographical community but one that is self-avowedly preproduced and directed, and which opens each episode with a written and spoken declaration such as: 'The tans you see might be fake but the people are all real, although some of what they do has been set up purely for your entertainment'. In an official *Seven Days* online posting of her 'thoughts', Samantha responded to interest in this opposition, asking fans: 'A lot of you have mentioned scripted reality do u think #sevendays wldv been better had it been more scripted??'¹⁰ Achieving no response, she prompted: 'I mean scripted as in the essex show'. Finally, she elicited two answers, including the following from 'Matt Allen': 'I think that essex show is utter crap! How can people like it ... that's all I hear about on Facebook though. Seven days is the real deal!'¹¹

Allen's response effectively closed the topic, and although the number of postings about *Seven Days* was marginally higher on Facebook itself (to which the Channel 4 website provided links), such exchanges remained dwarfed by the volume of discourse and apparent level of interest generated by the rival series.¹² Like that of Channel 4, the ITV website offered opportunities to 'watch and chat' and link to Twitter and Facebook discussions about *The Only Way is Essex*, and although the actual programme format did not build in the opportunity for viewers to intervene in the narrative, many of the cast began to tweet and respond to fan postings once their notoriety grew.¹³

In their multiplatform intensity, both *Seven Days* and *The Only Way is Essex* neatly demonstrate a paradox of contemporary viewing. On the one hand we typically have the opportunities and coming of age for what Tim O'Sullivan calls the 'idealised unfettered power of modern digital television viewers, now "magically" free to watch just whatever they want, just whenever they want to'.¹⁴ Whilst such power brings greater and much vaunted choice, the fragmentation it invites is steadily eroding the virtual imagined community of the traditional mass national television audience upon which more familiar ideals of 'impact' have depended. On the other hand there is the temporal locking-in of collective viewing through the extended 'liveness' of social media. At the time of writing *Seven Days* finished its run, yet all eight episodes remained temporarily available for viewing on Channel 4's '4oD' internet download service, and the cast continued to air their thoughts online. Although recoverable and available

¹⁰ < <http://sevendays.channel4.com/characters/samantha/thoughts/all>> Posted 6 November 2010.

¹¹ Ibid. The reference to Facebook alludes to what became quite a polarized debate, including postings from various 'Proud to be from Essex' groups set up to discuss and challenge the so-called stereotypes offered by *The Only Way is Essex*, as well as more conventional fan postings declaring support for the series.

¹² Clearly this is difficult to measure objectively, but whereas 151,126 followers on Facebook actively claimed to 'like' *The Only Way Is Essex*, only 2410 indicated similar approval for *Seven Days*, and the level of postings and exchanges regarding both tend to mirror this imbalance. See <<http://www.facebook.com/theonlywayisessex>> and <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/C4SevenDays>> accessed 26 January 2011.

¹³ A good example being the club promoter Mark Wright. See <<http://twitter.com/MarkWright>>.

¹⁴ Tim O'Sullivan, 'Researching the viewing culture', in Helen Wheatley (ed.), *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography* (London: IB Tauris, 2007), p. 161.

to view on the website, many of the exchanges with fans are time sensitive and would need to be archivally unravelled in conjunction with each relevant episode and other current cultural events. Indeed, in an apparently desperate attempt to generate discourse, many of Samantha's personal tweets comment and invite debate on developments in other, on-air, 'must see' reality programmes such as *X Factor* (ITV, 2006-) and *I'm A Celebrity Get me Out of Here* (ITV, 2002-). In all cases the sense of live and active participation for viewer-participants is clearly going to depend upon some approximation of 'real time' involvement, but the mode of engagement is of a fundamentally different order than that commanded by 'live' broadcast, even of prerecorded television, during the generation of channel scarcity. Recognition of a transformation along these lines is implicit in Caughie's comment on the reduced impact of *Occupation*. My more particular argument is that whereas Loach's ideal of 'national discourse' may have to be rethought, we might first have to work through the loss of the more mundane sense of belonging that was engendered by the terrestrial address to a mass national television audience – a loss that is indicated by the growing effort that broadcasters are currently investing in its substitution.

As Espen Ytreberg has demonstrated, broadcasters' efforts to expand into other platforms have also been facilitated by their organizational infrastructures and distribution systems and driven by their need to replace the decline in conventional viewers with new digital audiences and revenue sources.¹⁵ Extending the broadcasting conventions of liveness and eventfulness has become a powerful means of engaging new audiences and encouraging participation. One strategy has been to stage 'a string of carefully planned sub-events' (such as weekly evictions in the case of competition formats); another is to encourage viewers to participate in SMS chat and discussion groups and use paid marketing and other personnel to engage in and stimulate debate on a range of internet sites. Ytreberg argues that whilst multiplatform formats still tend to retain what Paddy Scannell once described as broadcasting's 'aura of presence',¹⁶ the participation that they elicit may also be 'experienced as an event in a quite immediate, bodily sense. ... Empirical research on participation in television formats via the SMS return channel describes a "kick", an affective intensity reported by some in the act of participating.'¹⁷

This affect is quite distinct from the 'vicarious participation' engineered by conventional live broadcasting. Moreover, Ytreberg adds, 'Influencing brings a sense of volition and formative intervention. Performing brings the excitement of being visible and noticeable to other participants, media stars and absent audiences.'¹⁸ The limited examples of *Seven Days* and *The Only Way is Essex* suggest that a key participatory pleasure resides in the (live) exchange of views about the programme (hence the preference for Facebook as a forum), which is both social and performative but only indirectly formative. The intention behind this sort of agency may be the self-definition of identity through an expression of taste, ridicule or

15 Espen Ytreberg, 'Extended liveness and eventfulness in multi-platform reality formats', *New Media and Society*, no. 11 (2009), pp. 467–85.

16 Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) p. 90; cited in Ytreberg, 'Extended liveness and eventfulness', p. 475.

17 Ytreberg, 'Extended liveness and eventfulness', p. 475.

18 Ibid., pp. 475–76.

19 Caughie, 'Mourning television', p. 421.

20 Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 19. Nichols uses the phrase in reference to the footage that became available of the infamous beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles policemen.

21 Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003), p. 27. Baudrillard was referring to the collapse of the World Trade Center following its attack on 11 September 2001.

22 Jay David Bolter, 'Remediation and the desire for immediacy', *Convergence*, no. 6 (2000), p. 59.

23 Ibid.

24 Su Holmes, "'The viewers have... taken over the airwaves'?" Participation, reality TV and approaching the audience-in-the-text', *Screen*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2008), p. 16.

fandom, but it seems less likely to be one that aspires to the forms of social change and radical intervention mourned by Caughie and Loach.

Nevertheless, in the frantic exchange it simulates between television and 'real life' *Seven Days* is a perfect example of the lengths to which reality television is willing to go in order to construct a performance of the real that simulates something of its dangerous, frame-challenging unpredictability. It has always been rare to encounter onscreen televisual moments that, in Caughie's own terms, 'break[s] the contract',¹⁹ such as historical events that cut 'through the inoculating power of signifying systems'²⁰ or radicalize 'the relation of the image to reality',²¹ but these potentialities still underwrite the promise of 'liveness' and are underwritten in turn by television's traditional sense of immediacy. Jay David Bolter has noted the extensive borrowing that goes on between television and web-platform aesthetics, often to the same end: 'What producers of new media artifacts are selling are experiences of immediacy. They engage in an ongoing struggle to define or redefine immediacy or authenticity of experience in a way that particularly enhances their own products.'²²

Broadcasting's now routine attempts to 'remediate' its defining qualities of liveness and immediacy, through the deployment of new media and the extension of programming onto different platforms, might be seen as a key example of what Bolter calls 'hypermediacy', a strategy which 'calls attention to the process of remediation by acknowledging or highlighting the medium itself', often leading to a shift in focus away from the original object of attention.²³ The renewed immediacy on offer in hypermediated, television-related forums or other websites is bound up with a mode of engagement that demands some degree of interactivity and participation from the user. Yet the particular qualities of intensity and immediacy that mark online chatting and tweeting are also highly individuating in effect. Characteristically they are both publicly performative – because available for all to see – yet tend to adopt the private form of an interpersonal exchange. This actively shakes off and circumvents both the collective address and wider sense of belonging that was fundamental to the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy informing traditional relationships between audience and broadcaster during a period of channel scarcity. Moreover, because exchanges may be conducted 'live' or maintained intermittently over several hours or even days, they also work outside of (although do not necessarily ignore or reject) the daily temporal order that the fixed schedules of broadcasting impose. In her analysis of audience participation in *Big Brother* and *Eden*, Su Holmes demonstrates that the *performance* of participation is crucial:

The opportunity for physical intervention does not in itself reshape the power relations which structure the production of the audience, and this is why the idea of a performance of participation is so central: it offers a more complex and contradictory route through which to explore ideas of agency and power.²⁴

25 Ibid.

26 Fiske identifies seven particular functions served by television that characterize it as 'bardic', all of which depend upon its ideological centrality to society and work to promote dominant modes of thinking and being as themselves 'socio-central'. John Fiske, *Reading Television* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 85–89.

27 Jane Frost, quoted in Hilary Curtis, 'Brand aid', *Media Guardian*, 1 November 1999, pp. 10–11.

28 Sean Day-Lewis, *Talk of Drama: Views of the Television Dramatist Now and Then* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1998), p. 6.

She notes, moreover, that it is a problematic and ongoing struggle that leaves 'the audience wanting more'.²⁵ Just as the opportunity to approve or reject an onscreen participant through the exercise of a telephone vote will always be circumscribed by the options on offer, the social pleasures of gossip and the public sharing of taste-judgement must remain dependent upon the programme texts offered up for commentary, and so require continual stimulation and novelty.

It is too soon to predict accurately quite where such developments are leading, but my sense is that this tendency to fuel but not satisfy the audience's desire to participate will also in time change the affective nature of the engagement between viewer and onscreen character, particularly over an extended series or serial. It may even replace modes of alignment with an altogether different form of attachment, more divided and dividing along the lines of being involved/uninvolved as participants. As discourses around television proliferate and grow in significance, broadcast television becomes more mediated than mediating, and a growing number of programmes are watched purely so that they might then be talked about. The common invitation from presenters to 'log on, get involved' also suggests that what the industry calls 'lean back' viewing is by default characterized as 'uninvolved', and implies that the limited experience broadcasting once offered no longer seems to be quite what it was. Television can no longer be suggestively characterized as the 'Bard' of the gathering (even in Fiske's qualified coinage²⁶); it is closer to being the party piece, the 'turn' in the corner, desperate to be talked about in its bid to attract any attention at all. In this it is responding to its own logic of survival. As a BBC marketing executive once wryly prophesied: 'We may not have BBC television in the future, but we will have BBC holograms'.²⁷ What social media are permitting in exchange for what we may yet term 'classic engagement' is a type of immediate and individuated 'public discourse' or viewer 'agency', the latter concept having a very particular lineage in screen studies that I would like to revisit, as it does not seem to have survived in its current usage.

Indeed, the interventions that Caughie celebrates and mourns in his reflection on *Screen* history require that we remember altogether different aspirations for 'agency', the radical possibility of which was exhaustively picked over in Marxist and post-Marxist cultural theory. In particular, the idea of agency as a form of intervention in dominant ideological and television industry practices was predicated on the understanding of broadcasting as the 'few to the many', and its ghost lurks also at the heart of Loach's recent critique of BBC management. This latter narrative of stifled creativity seems to retain currency whatever the regime, and resembles, for example, Sean Day-Lewis's attack of a decade ago on 'broadcasting mandarins'.²⁸ What distinguishes Day-Lewis's account is that he implicates Loach himself in the loss of the singular voice in television drama, attributing the 'disaster' of the disappearing single play to the steady shift from studio to film during the 1960s and 1970s, and the concurrent shift in power away from the writer, both of which were

pioneered by Loach and vindicated by the heightened impact of his work. If nothing else such a contradictory diagnosis exposes the difficulty in equating creative agency with the relative autonomy of any single interest group. In this respect it is also worth remembering that some of the more decisive power shifts took place within the BBC during the early to mid 1990s as a response to the rapidly fragmenting broadcasting audience and its political need to maintain share. During this period some commissioning and other editorial powers were progressively clawed back from heads of department and put into the hands of channel controllers and central strategists. It was a decisive shift in leverage that was expedited not just by the internal market ideology of the Birt era,²⁹ but also by a protracted run of creatively lacklustre and poorly performing drama series/serials and situation comedies. By the time I moved across to BBC Television in 1994, management consensus was that producers had failed to deliver, had squandered their freedoms, and that some – to quote a choice phrase used by David Liddiment at the time – had simply ‘atrophied’.³⁰

My point is not to defend the management line then taken nor to justify the shift in power away from producers to strategic managers, but I do think the example acknowledges something of the contradictory responsibilities and responsiveness of broadcasting, in this instance deriving from the institutional conundrum by which the BBC is continually hung out to dry, that arises from its implicit remit to both lead and be led by public tastes. The conventionalized opposition between art and bureaucracy, like that between art and commerce, is eternally suggestive but ultimately unhelpful in this context. It may be, as Terry Eagleton notes, that ‘the more culture is commercialized, the more this imposition of market discipline forces its producers into the conservative values of prudence, anti-innovation and a nervousness of being disruptive’,³¹ but such truisms reveal relatively little of the complex ebbs and flows in the historical relationships between commerce, institution and creative agency in British television. Although there is no facile link to be made between Loach’s lament for stifled voices and Caughie’s mourning for a mode of political and ethical engagement in scholarship (and I certainly do not imply an equivalent stasis in screen theory), such a parallel does highlight something he alludes to early on in his essay, which is the need to ‘work through’ television within ‘commodified capitalist culture’, not outside of it. To revisit a later argument:

If elegy still seems seductive and the organization of pessimism still seems to resonate, it is because an academic fascination with the phenomenon of television *as it is* and the description of its many forms *as they are* seems so often (but not always) to have replaced that ethical and political engagement with the possibilities of a different television.³²

This observation is made following the list of *Screen* contributions that conveys something of the range of ethical and political debates the journal

²⁹ John Birt was director-general of the BBC from 1992 to 2000, his leadership and legacy characterized as contentious and divisive.

³⁰ Liddiment had then recently been appointed Head of Entertainment Group; the remark was made in conversation with the author.

³¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 71.

³² Caughie, ‘Mourning television’, p. 418.

- 33 Charlotte Brunsdon 'Problems with quality', *Screen*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1990), pp. 67–91.

- 34 John Tulloch, *Television Drama: Agency, Audience and Myth* (London: Routledge 1990), p. 23.

- 35 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), p. 13.

- 36 Karen Lury, 'A response to John Corner', *Screen*, vol. 48, no. 3 (2007), p. 372.

has offered, even though Caughie seems here to be eliding the differences in function of alternative modes of criticism and engagement. Although the academy has often found it difficult to enter policy debates on predetermined, official terms (clearly the case with the 'quality' arguments of the early 1990s, as Charlotte Brunsdon then demonstrated³³), I would suggest that it might now be better placed to imagine the *preconditions* of a 'different television' than to once again seek to intervene strategically in the creative forms that this might take. In any event, intervention should not be confused with the equally important business of understanding the evolving forms that television already assumes. The critical strategy of paying attention to television '*as it is*' has proved highly productive in its insight into the point of engagement between viewer and programme precisely because, and not in spite, of the way in which it has been marked by fascination, and also precisely because of its interest in the typical rather than the exceptional. Arguably for too long (certainly throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s) the 'typical' was subject to the totalizing sweep of either condemnatory or celebratory leftist critique, and neither '*Screen* theory' nor screen theory were untouched by the taint of its chauvinism. Tellingly, John Tulloch once cited Loach himself 'as a particularly extreme case of left-wing television workers being constructed as "other" by left-wing academic writing'.³⁴ Outside of the framework of personal memory it can be difficult to connect with the ambition of some radical academic interventions from this period, and perhaps it is because I first read so many of them long after their 'moment' that I find it difficult to share Caughie's regret in this instance. Whilst I would echo his frustration with television analysis as description, the relative depoliticization of cultural consumption can indicate cautious uncertainty rather than apathy, for as Henry Jenkins notes, we cannot 'meaningfully critique convergence until it is more fully understood', further to which he proposes the generation of public insight as a more appropriate objective.³⁵ In any event, an exploratory approach to the analysis of television forms *as they are* is not an essentially uncritical enterprise. In Karen Lury's words, it need not 'necessarily float on a sea of unreflective relativism (or narcissism) or be purely celebratory'.³⁶ It is, however, a mode of engagement that resists defining itself as a project of valorization and which remains cautious about the reductive tendencies of over-ambitious theory to necessarily achieve political ends.

Caughie's itemization of possibilities for mourning thus notably excludes the loss of television *as* television, at least in the sense that I would lament, in which it was characterized by its provision of a nationally collective and collectivizing experience. Such an exercise of power was the premiss for a generation of ideological critique and the broader theorization of the medium as hegemonic, but clearly television's historically unprecedented reach was also the basis on which imperatives for (counter) intervention were predicated, and was a precondition for the impact of notable interventions such as the Loach-directed *Cathy Come*

³⁷ See Helen Piper, 'Vintage entertainment: nostalgia, the archive and the disappearing pleasures of collective television viewing', *Journal of British Cinema and Television Studies* (forthcoming, 2011).

³⁸ Paddy Scannell, 'The dialectic of time and television', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 625 (2009), p. 233.

Home (BBC, 1966). In spite of the uncomfortable power wielded by broadcasters (then as now) it is precisely the viewing experience and pleasure of television *as* television that seems to me to be progressively diminished by its convergence and proliferation into something more plural, participatory and multiplatform. It is for this ambivalent and politically troubling reason that I too wish to mourn television (indeed, I have recently 'penned an elegy' of my own),³⁷ despite the added danger in holding the wake while the corpse still breathes. Scannell concludes a recent paper on time and television with the reminder: 'As for its impact and effect – while this is experienced and responded to in the present, it only begins to become apparent in the past. This basic historical truth is what television as a technology and cultural form most basically discloses.'³⁸

We do not always know what we have until it is gone; and this inevitably tardy awareness of having failed to appreciate something taken for granted at the time – a particular truism of the everyday – can in itself engender feelings of loss. To work these feelings through we might also want to recognize those instances where intervention has actively worked against an understanding of engagement and pleasure, and where a readiness to critique might have contributed to a systematic undervaluation of the medium itself.

'Histories of the digital future: archives of the audio-visual' workshop, University of Warwick, 19 May 2011

LAUREN JADE THOMPSON

The poster for the 'Archives of the audio-visual' workshop features what has become the defining image of the Histories of the Digital Future project: a photograph of discarded cathode-ray tube television sets piled up amongst rubbish bags on a street corner (figure 1). This image of a 'dead' and yet ever-present technology has been invoked at various stages in the University of Warwick's Department of Film and Television Studies programme. In 2010 guest speaker A. L. Rees presented an image of a burning television set, taken from one of David Hall's *TV Pieces*, at a departmental research seminar.¹ At this event, too, Amy Holdsworth offered a contrasting set of images that demonstrated the materiality and historicity of television: a wall of television sets on display at the National Media Museum and a black, bulky television discarded on top of an old sofa in an alleyway in Glasgow. Such images represent, as Charlotte Brunsdon commented in her opening address at the workshop, a technology at the moment between 'history and rubbish'.

The discussions about audiovisual archives at this event were set against a backdrop of financial, political and technological upheaval in the archival sector itself. Taking place just a few days before the British Film Institute's 'Town Hall' meeting,² and following announcements of the suspension of the University of East Anglia's Film Archiving MA course (the only one of its kind), the proposed closure of British Library Newspapers in Colindale and the removal of its holdings to Boston Spa,³ the event had a strong case to make for the preservation of access to

¹ A. L. Rees, 'UK artists' film on television', in Laura Mulvey and Jamie Sexton (eds), *Experimental British Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 146-65.

² The BFI's Town Hall meeting took place on 23 May 2011.

³ British Library Press Release, 'British Library and brightsolid partnership to digitise up to 40 million pages of historic newspapers' <<http://pressandpolicy.bl.uk/Press-Releases/British-Library-and-brightsolid-partnership-to-digitise-up-to-40-million-pages-of-historic-newspapers-271.aspx>> accessed 19 May 2010.



Fig. 1. © Sconce/Spigel, used with kind permission.

physical archives, even in the event of digitization and its utopian discourses. With changes to the BFI Library, and the Institute's relationship with higher education currently undergoing negotiation and (semi) public debate, the event encouraged researchers to share theorizations of, and experiences of being in, the archive, expanding upon discussions in recent publications such as the 'Archive for the Future' issue of *Camera Obscura* and the 'Writing from the Archive' issue of *The Communication Review*.⁴

The assembled crowd was addressed as a collection of archivists. As Brunsdon pointed out, whether or not we consider ourselves historians, everyone who teaches and researches film and television is, in some sense, an archivist, engaging in DIY archival collection. Any kind of study or research into the audiovisual involves the building of a collection, a personal archive. In tandem with this, we have seen our object of study transformed through the digitization of production, distribution and exhibition. The day was therefore set up as a means of exploring these meetings between the archive and the digital. Digitization has, in some ways, allowed us access to the archive – for example with digitally remastered prints of films that allow reexhibition and distribution on new formats such as DVD and Blu-ray. It has also allowed the creation of new digital archives such as YouTube. Brunsdon's opening address quite clearly set up the key aims of the day: to reflect upon the archival turn in film and television studies and to explore the promises and perils of digitization.

⁴ *Camera Obscura*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2007); *The Communication Review*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2010).

5 Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

Whilst the connections between an exploration of the archive and a dialogue with historians might seem obvious, the presence of keynote speaker Carolyn Steedman, from the Department of History at Warwick University, emphasized the complications of this assumption. History is a discipline for which use of the archive is routine, necessary even, but is perhaps remarkable for its lack of theorization. The frequency with which speakers at this event referred to Steedman's recent book, *Dust*, highlighted the rare value of a historian who wishes to speak and write about the archive itself.⁵ Indeed, Steedman's paper ended with a project, a wish to make historians speak about what it is they do, and the discussion that followed at the workshop seemed to engage with this aim, opening up a valuable dialogue between the disciplines. It was also clear that the problems she described were mirrored across the two disciplines. Steedman expressed anxiety in her paper over the fact that the images of archival documents captured on her new digital camera allowed her, through image manipulation and viewing technology (zoom, contrast adjustment), to read words that would previously have been illegible, and had remained illegible for two hundred years. Helen Wheatley compared this epistemological question to the anxiety that many of us feel when analyzing film and television texts – that to pause, slow down, rewatch, is to distort the original object of study.

Fears of distortion and the distancing of the archival researcher from the object of study also dominate current debates about the relationship between the physical and the digital archive, and are in many ways at the centre of anxieties surrounding the digitization of the archival holdings at institutions such as the BFI and British Library Newspapers. The sense that digitization, despite its utopian discourse, is not a loss-free project pervades such discussions. At the event, papers from three current MA students in the Department of Film and Television Studies, Kaitlin Forcier, Holly Mak and Marta Wasik, stressed the materiality of the physical archive, emphasizing qualities such as 'tactility' and 'thinginess' that characterize the traditional archive. The 'quidity' of the physical archive, contributors agreed, was one of its most important qualities, the archive artefact's status as object being part of what makes it knowable to the researcher. Discussion also stressed the importance and value of the archivist, able to explicate an artefact's presence and guide the researcher through the archive, a figure that is notably absent from most digital archives. Digital archives also offer only contingent access, a particular problem with unofficial outlets such as YouTube, where videos can be removed without warning by the uploaders or through corporate control by copyright holders, and content can often only be accessed through a specific search term. In this sense the digital archive restricts the possibility of an accidental encounter within the archival object. As Brunsdon writes, it is the preservation of the possibility of 'an encounter with an undisciplined trace; with something not yet put into words' that is at stake.⁶

The specificity of the archival object in the digitization process is also important here, as indicated by the discussion of the process of digitizing

6 Charlotte Brunsdon, 'In the dark: the BFI Archive', in Toby Miller (ed.), 'In focus: the British Film Institute', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2008), pp. 152-55.

VHS tapes – a task currently being undertaken by many film and television departments and archival institutions, as well as by individual researchers. As Richard Wallace asked, is our object in this case the isolated television programme that the VHS was set up to record, or is it the physical VHS tape in its entirety, complete with advertisements, interruptions and analogue ‘defects’ of the tape? The underlying theme of this discussion was that a digitized copy of an archival object both is and is not the same as its original. While the utility of a digital copy might be its strongest feature, there is no escaping the fact that these items are just that – copies – and, more significantly, are different from their originals. A scanned image of a court document, for example, might preserve the words on the page but does not preserve the item ‘as is’. Similarly, a digitized version of a VHS tape may hold the same programmes, and even the ‘flow’ of television as recorded, but it cannot be used or encountered in the same way. A policy of total digitization, therefore, presents itself as an unsatisfactory way of preserving and accessing archival material to the researcher of the audiovisual. The specific values of the archival object that were invoked during discussion – tactility and physicality – and their importance to archival research necessarily complicate the utopian discourses of digitization policies, and there is clearly a need for dialogue on this issue between scholars and archival institutions.

The specificities of researching television through the archive also received particular attention at the event. Although, as many speakers had suggested, everything within the archive is ‘lost’ in some way, the ephemeral nature of television means this inaccessibility can often be even more pronounced, a concern that informs many current research projects in television studies, including ‘Spaces of Television: Production, Site and Style’ and ‘A History of Television for Women in Britain: 1947-1989’. Rachel Moseley, principal investigator on the latter project, in her paper ‘Lost in the archive’ compared the television researcher’s processes of reconstruction to the sewing of a patchwork quilt, aiming to reproduce or reconstruct historical television not in its original form but as something else altogether, through existing fragments, plans of studios, lists of props and personnel, and interviews with viewers. These fragments are then sewn together by the researcher: recontextualized, stitched through, made narrative; an analogy that echoed Steedman’s comments from earlier in the day that ‘history is always written’. Moseley also discussed the obstacle of absence in the archive, and the researcher’s temptation to create a narrative for absence, using an example from her own research – the absence of discussion of the popular British television series *Poldark* in women’s magazines of the 1970s. The ways in which the desires of the researcher can shape their findings within the archive was also a key focus of Charles Barr’s paper ‘Archival trial and error’, which tracked the genealogy of a series of research errors that he had uncovered in existing publications (including his own). These examples acted as a cautionary tale to the historical researcher, demonstrating the necessity of travelling back to the original source wherever possible and warning against

7 Amy Holdsworth, *Television, Memory and Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming 2011).

approaching the archive with set expectations. Barr's paper also offered a series of more heartwarming, inspirational tales of archival research that managed to capture the sense of adventure that one gets from going into the archive and uncovering something new. A particular highlight of this was his reconstruction of Churchill's wartime film-viewing through thank-you notes written by his private secretary to film distributors. Moseley also described these pleasures of archival work, and suggested that it is in part the experience of working in the archive that produces interesting and passionate history writing.

The presentation of archival material in a physical and public space, that of the museum, was also considered at the event. Based upon a section of her forthcoming book, *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*,⁷ Holdsworth's paper focused on the television exhibitions at Bradford's National Media Museum and the curatorial processes that underpin them. As well as an exploration of the ways in which both the materiality (its physical form and status as object of furniture) and ephemerality (its changing technologies, its everydayness) of television is presented, Holdsworth also identified the curators' mobilization of memory and nostalgia in order to convey meanings and messages from the archival objects to visitors both old and young. In a move that tackled what was, for me, one of the underexamined areas of the day, she discussed the address of the museum space to an intergenerational audience, which, she argued, offered 'memory' for older visitors and 'history' for their children and grandchildren, as well as seeking to create memory through experiential learning. A consideration of who it is we are telling these stories to, or sewing the blankets for, seemed to be the missing link in the series of relationships that had been discussed that day – between researcher and archive, between researcher and archivist, and now between archive and audience.

Although, as Steedman suggests in *Dust*, the archive is by definition the repository of 'that which will not go away', the primary anxiety expressed in relation to the digitization of archives at the 'Archives of the Audio-Visual' event was precisely that these things *might* 'go away'. With limited budgets, resources and staff, the fear amongst those present was that digitization of archives would inevitably involve a selection process during which many of the uncatalogued or unofficial documents or objects might be overlooked or wilfully discarded. Exploring these anxieties further, thoughts turned to the question of the positive aspects of the digital archive. Moseley stressed the importance of widening access, while other audience members were able to recount instances of research made easier by the existence of digital archives, particularly online unofficial outlets. All such comments, however, came with the caveat that researchers wanted to use digital archives as well as, not instead of, material holdings. There was a general wariness of utopian discourses of digitization that many see as functioning politically as a screen for cuts, especially in the case of the many archives that we know are not yet fully catalogued. Stella Bruzzi, about to embark upon a Leverhulme-funded

project that will make use of both official physical and unofficial digital archives, fondly described a lost afternoon in the archive spent looking at pictures of puddings, an experience which she saw as impossible to recreate in the digital archive. The warm and knowing reaction to her story made it clear that all present felt a need to defend the existence of, and our access to, material archives.

The workshop functioned as an alarm call for intervention into current archival policy, suggesting the urgency of scholarly involvement. Despite the acknowledgement of some of the positive aspects of official and unofficial digital archives heard throughout the day, it was also repeatedly stressed that the very best historical research is produced when the researcher has some opportunity to lose herself in the physical archives, and to perhaps track down Churchill's thank-you notes or stumble across David Attenborough's shopping list while she does so. When it comes to researching histories of the audiovisual, we would very much like to have our 'pudding', and eat it too. By drawing out the shared concerns of film and television scholars at a pivotal moment in archival policy and practice, this event provided a timely reminder of the importance of maintaining a dialogue with archival institutions. If policies of digitization and biting budget cuts continue as planned, my fear is that the 'Archives of the Audio-Visual' event may be a fond eulogy to a method of historical research that will elude many young and future scholars altogether.

reviews

James Tobias, *Sync: Stylistics of Hieroglyphic Time*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010, 304 pp.

ANDY BIRTWISTLE

While recent scholarship on film sound has done much to challenge the long-standing visual bias of film studies, there remains surprisingly little work that engages directly with cinema's audiovisuality, and with what precisely is at stake in the sound-image relations constituting the cinematic text and cinematic experience. Aside from the seminal work of Michel Chion and dedicated studies by writers such as James Lastra and Robert Robertson,¹ the issue of synchronization – surely central to any discussion of cinema's audiovisuality – has largely escaped sustained critical attention.

Casting a long shadow over discussions of audiovisual synchronization is the 1928 joint statement on sound published by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, in which the three Soviet directors argued that cinematic sound-image relations should be governed by the principles of montage rather than by forms of naturalism. While in spirit this manifesto proposed an affirmative poetics of audiovisuality, it has nevertheless been called into service by a strain of political modernism that has valued audiovisual counterpoint primarily in terms of its opposition to classical cinema's dominant codes of construction.

Apart from the truth claims of documentary, and of realist practices employing a direct sound aesthetic, historically it has been the illusionistic character of naturalistic modes of representation that has perhaps most exercised critics concerned with the ideological dynamics of synchronized sound. Thus in the landmark 'Cinema/Sound' issue of the journal *Yale French Studies*, Rick Altman described the naturalistic effect created by synchronization of sound and image as 'sound film's fundamental lie'.² The value judgement implicit in Altman's commentary signals the fact that political discourse relating to the synchronization of sound and image

¹ James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000); Robert Robertson, *Eisenstein on the Audiovisual: the Montage of Music, Image and Sound in Cinema* (London: IB Tauris, 2010).

² Rick Altman, 'Introduction', *Yale French Studies*, no. 60 (1980), p. 6.

has been articulated primarily around the figures of naturalism and a resistant other, constructing on the one hand an illusionistic, manipulative cinema of deceit, and on the other a radical, anti-illusionistic and virtuous form of counter-cinema. But despite the wealth of alternatives to classical formulations of sound–image relations offered by the histories of animation, documentary and avant-garde filmmaking – as well as by non-naturalistic uses of synchronized sound within classical cinema – the notion of a nonsynchronous, contrapuntal and dialectical use of sound has been privileged over other audiovisual modalities within dominant accounts of radical audiovisual poetics. Unfortunately, not only does the critical focus that has been placed on audiovisual counterpoint ignore the fact that Eisenstein saw in the congruence of sound and image tremendous expressive potential, it has also meant that modes of synchronization which cannot be understood within this tradition have been neglected, forgotten, ignored or dismissed as having no significant political dynamic.

Sync: Stylistics of Hieroglyphic Time offers a much needed and thoroughly radical revision of debates around synchronization, opening up a range of different audiovisual modalities to political analysis, and breaking the stranglehold that existing forms of political discourse have had on discussions of sound–image relations. The author’s key move has been to employ the notion of synch to address not only the relationships between sound and image in audiovisual media but also those between text and audience, focusing primarily on the experience of reception. This bold move allows Tobias to consider what is at stake politically in the affective dimensions of audiovisual spectatorship without ever losing sight of the individual texts for which he offers detailed readings. Located at the centre of this novel approach are the figures of musicality and gesture, articulated through case studies that engage with a range of topics and texts, including Eisenstein’s use of montage in *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), Oskar Fischinger’s abstract animated film *Motion Painting No. 1* (1947), the work of film composers Hanns Eisler and Bernard Herrman, cinematic and televisual representations of jazz, John Cameron Mitchell’s rock musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001), and the work of multimedia artist Steina Vasulka.

In each of the book’s six key case studies Tobias explores the ways in which concepts of musicality and gesture can be applied both to an understanding of sound–image relationships within an audiovisual text, and to audience engagement with time-based synchronized media. Thus Tobias contends that the concept of musicality can be usefully understood not only as a mode of articulation but also as a mode of reception. In focusing on musicality and gesture in this way, Tobias challenges the established ways of thinking about the audiovisual, redescribing time-based media in terms of synchronization and temporality rather than sound and image. This allows the author to reconfigure the films and multimedia works he studies as ‘devices that diagram, express, and interpret unfamiliar temporal relations’ (p. 1), and as ‘timepieces that don’t tell time ... but diagram it in affective labor’ (p. 34). Tobias then

proposes that these temporal diagrams open out onto larger historical contexts and transformations; that is, not only do films and other media works articulate particular forms of temporality in their presentation and reception, but the relations that are forged between sound and image in time-based media also tell us something important about our understanding of the past, the present, and visions of the future. Finally, seeking to understand the ways in which producers and audiences interact with these various temporal streams, Tobias examines the affective work undertaken in both audiovisual production and reception.

If the approach adopted by Tobias is highly original, it is also complex and extremely challenging. In its attempt to think about the relationships between sound and image, text and spectator, in an almost entirely new register, *Sync* represents a hugely ambitious project. The multiple strands of Tobias's analysis – labour, affect, politics, history, personhood and publicity, musicality, gesture and temporality – certainly make for a dense text, but one that is, paradoxically, loosely woven, as there are perhaps too many concerns running through the work for each to be resolved satisfactorily in relation to the whole. But if Tobias's approach is risky it is also exciting. Working outwards from a particular historical moment, film, concept or debate, the author explores the ways in which the historical and social location of a particular media text, and its own articulation of space and time (achieved through synchronization of sound and image), can be understood in relation to spectatorship. The merits of Tobias's ambition are clearly evident in the chapter on visual music, which seeks to reclaim and review Fischinger's film *Motion Painting No. 1*. Tobias suggests that the visual music project, exemplified by Fischinger's work, has been marginalized within histories of the modernist avant garde. At the same time, in the popular imagination these works have been understood to represent an (audio)vision of the future – in this regard sharing many similarities with electronic music. The futural dynamic of visual music is evidenced by the appearance of Fischinger's Lumigraph colour organ in Ib Melchior's 1964 science fiction film *The Time Travellers*, leading Tobias to comment, 'Visual music ... appears as ahistorical and futural; it seems somehow indiscriminately present, a familiar achievement of modernist aesthetics that is as yet technologically unfulfilled, a still-to-be concretized new medium awaiting its avatar' (p. 79). In signalling the future in this way, Tobias proposes that Fischinger's film can be understood as a temporal diagram, 'a mode of stylizing the futural capacities of the cinema's instrumentalities – or those of television or of digital gaming' (p. 80). While this analysis of temporality is in itself highly productive, making connections between films produced in the first half of the last century and the sound-image relations generated by contemporary interactive media forms, Tobias also goes on to consider the ways in which the streaming of sound and image in films like *Motion Painting* pattern and articulate the duration of the film itself, and its subsequent reception by an audience.

Ordinarily, studies of filmmakers working in visual music tend to concentrate on matters of technology, technique and authorship, and in this respect *Sync* offers a radical and creative alternative to existing discourse on the topic, most importantly rethinking notions of the political in relation to audiovisuality. However, while the journey undertaken in the chapter on visual music is thought-provoking and at times exciting, the conclusions it reaches are unsurprising. In the end, Tobias simply figures the political dynamic of visual music in terms of resistance

to the early industrial cinemas, which marginalized the avant-gardes; to fascism, which branded it impermissible; to the Hollywood studio system ... and also, finally, to art-historical methods that insist on a critical avant-garde antithetical to the braided seriation of the popular, the technical, and the ecstatic. (pp.104-5)

Looking beyond the merits of individual chapters, the strength of the book as a whole lies in part in the fresh perspectives it provides on familiar subjects. Focusing on Eisenstein's model of audiovisual correspondence rather than the theories of vertical montage with which he is more readily associated, and tackling Eisler's dissonant synchronization through the notion of hysteria, Tobias's revisionist approach has much to recommend it. Similarly his analyses of less well-known material – such as *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, the multimedia performances of Vasulka, and Larry Clark's 1977 free jazz movie *Passing Through* – serve to indicate an alternative political discourse for sound–image relations. But while the book is undoubtedly bristling with ideas, the sheer number of issues being considered means that the thread of the author's argument is sometimes difficult to follow. Furthermore, the use of language occasionally obscures rather than illuminates the ideas being examined. However, there is much to recommend this book which, in providing new perspectives on the political dimensions of audiovisuality, repays the close attention it demands.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr049

Tamara Trodd (ed.), *Screen/Space: the Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (Rethinking Art's Histories Series). Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011, 214 pp.

ALISON BUTLER

Screen/Space is the latest addition to a small but growing body of scholarship on the art form that cannot quite articulate its name: is it artists' film and video, gallery film, screen-based installation or post-cinema? This uncertain designation is indicative of the fluid and transitional nature of the form. In her introduction, Tamara Trodd explains that the essays collected in this book (derived, with some omissions and

Ordinarily, studies of filmmakers working in visual music tend to concentrate on matters of technology, technique and authorship, and in this respect *Sync* offers a radical and creative alternative to existing discourse on the topic, most importantly rethinking notions of the political in relation to audiovisuality. However, while the journey undertaken in the chapter on visual music is thought-provoking and at times exciting, the conclusions it reaches are unsurprising. In the end, Tobias simply figures the political dynamic of visual music in terms of resistance

to the early industrial cinemas, which marginalized the avant-gardes; to fascism, which branded it impermissible; to the Hollywood studio system ... and also, finally, to art-historical methods that insist on a critical avant-garde antithetical to the braided seriation of the popular, the technical, and the ecstatic. (pp.104-5)

Looking beyond the merits of individual chapters, the strength of the book as a whole lies in part in the fresh perspectives it provides on familiar subjects. Focusing on Eisenstein's model of audiovisual correspondence rather than the theories of vertical montage with which he is more readily associated, and tackling Eisler's dissonant synchronization through the notion of hysteria, Tobias's revisionist approach has much to recommend it. Similarly his analyses of less well-known material – such as *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, the multimedia performances of Vasulka, and Larry Clark's 1977 free jazz movie *Passing Through* – serve to indicate an alternative political discourse for sound–image relations. But while the book is undoubtedly bristling with ideas, the sheer number of issues being considered means that the thread of the author's argument is sometimes difficult to follow. Furthermore, the use of language occasionally obscures rather than illuminates the ideas being examined. However, there is much to recommend this book which, in providing new perspectives on the political dimensions of audiovisuality, repays the close attention it demands.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr049

Tamara Trodd (ed.), *Screen/Space: the Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (Rethinking Art's Histories Series). Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011, 214 pp.

ALISON BUTLER

Screen/Space is the latest addition to a small but growing body of scholarship on the art form that cannot quite articulate its name: is it artists' film and video, gallery film, screen-based installation or post-cinema? This uncertain designation is indicative of the fluid and transitional nature of the form. In her introduction, Tamara Trodd explains that the essays collected in this book (derived, with some omissions and

- 1 The book of the conference was published in 2011. David Curtis, A.L. Rees, Duncan White and Steven Ball (eds), *Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance and Film* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011).
- 2 There are, however, some artists and filmmakers who have participated in both moments, for example Peter Weibel.
- 3 P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: the American Avant-Garde, 1943-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Rosalind Krauss, 'A Voyage on the North Sea': *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Chrissie Iles, *Into the Light: the Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (New York, NY: Whitney Museum, 2001).
- 4 In some respects this is a similar argument to those made by feminist theorists in the late 1970s. See Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom, 'The avant-garde: theories and histories', *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1978), pp. 113-28; Constance Penley, 'The avant-garde and its imaginary', *Camera Obscura*, no. 2 (1977), pp. 24-25.

additions, from a conference held in 2007) aim to address the relative scarcity of critical literature in the field, and to contribute to the project of defining an emerging art form. The major causal factors in the proliferation of multiple and hybrid forms of single and multi-channel projection in art galleries since the early 1990s are undoubtedly technological, institutional, and broadly cultural and economic rather than strictly art historical. The development of video projection, the evolution of lightweight, cheap and latterly high-definition video cameras, non-linear editing and, more generally, the revolution in new media and the reorientation or decline of old media have all played their part. Equally the rise of 'destination' museums, such as the Guggenheim in Bilbao or Tate Modern in London, has created exhibition spaces for work of this kind. Practitioners may have backgrounds in filmmaking (Chantal Akerman, Harun Farocki, Isaac Julien) or fine art (Tacita Dean, Mona Hatoum, Eija-Liisa Ahtila). Some utilize a cinematic idiom, some derive from the traditions of video and performance art, some reference older arts such as painting and sculpture, while others align themselves with new media. A selfconscious promiscuity with regard to medium is inscribed in many contemporary projected works via the incorporation of other cultural forms and the image of the museum itself. These developments have created an opportune moment for the reappraisal of the expanded cinema and experimental film of the 1960s and 1970s, for example at the major conference 'Expanded cinema: activating the space of reception', held at Tate Modern in 2009.¹ However, while a fortuitous turn of events in the present may have enabled art and film historians to secure the legacy of a significant body of work from the past, it is important not to misread the contemporary wave of artists' film and video as either a revival or a pale imitation of the earlier work.²

While Trodd does not offer a broad historical contextualization, she does offer some sharp analysis of the historiographic issues that arise from the interdisciplinarity of the field. Film scholars, she claims, tend to assimilate gallery film and video into the tradition of experimental cinema, whereas art historians understand it primarily in relation to installation art. (I suspect that the virulence of some criticism of the work is due to a disciplinary redoubling: as installation work it is flawed by its tendency to engulf rather than activate the viewer, and as film it is undermined by a *dispositif* that distracts rather than absorbing the spectator.) Where the two disciplines intersect, as in the critical writings of P. Adams Sitney, Rosalind Krauss and Chrissie Iles,³ all of whom assimilate the project of artists' film to that of minimalist or postminimalist art, this has generated a powerful but narrow framework for the evaluation of works, based on resistance to commodified mass culture (defined largely in terms of spectacle). Trodd argues that the modernist legacy embedded in this framework fosters a critical suspicion of new media and its associated forms of reception, and leaves notable lacunae, for example around questions of identity and affect.⁴ This collection of nine essays, grouped thematically under the headings

'Histories', 'Screen' and 'Space', is intended to sketch a framework upon which more adequate and pluralistic critical analysis might develop.

The contributions to the 'Histories' section of the book set out to complicate the received history of this art form by examining precedents from the interwar and postwar avant gardes. Noam Elcott's essay deals with an early attempt to mount a multimedia museum display, the unrealized plan for a 'Room of Our Time' in the Hanover Provincial Museum, on which László Moholy-Nagy collaborated with the museum's director Alexander Dorner around 1930. Elcott frames his research as an archaeology of the interwar imagination of space and time, and as a model for negotiating mediatized space and time. 'Rather than negate or subvert the cinematic *dispositif*', he claims, artists of the interwar avant garde 'worked dialectically to conserve and abolish it at the same time' (p. 26). In place of the tired dichotomy of black box and white cube, Elcott posits relationships between Moholy-Nagy's 'light-space' and the 'spaceless darkness' of the cinema, as theorized by Rudolf Harms. For these modernists, he reminds us, 'Disembodiment, immateriality, weightlessness, and illusion were not conditions to be overcome but experiences to be mobilized towards new ends' (p. 46). In the same section, Maxa Zoller offers three comparative case studies: *Exprmntl 4*, the famous avant-garde festival held at Knokke-le-Zoute in Belgium in 1967; *Film als Film*, the exhibition curated by Birgit Hein and Wulf Herzogenrath in Cologne in 1977; and *Film as Film*, the London reworking of that exhibition in 1979. In each of the three studies, tendencies towards the expanded field are discernible, although in differing ways: towards performance in the festival, towards the display of objects in the first exhibition, and towards expanded cinema in the second. The use of case studies provides a helpful reminder of the role of practical problem-solving and historical contingency in shaping cultural trends. Kate Mondloch's contribution rounds off this section with an analysis of the function of illusion in Michael Snow's installation work. Mondloch's subtle and informed account of the ambivalent part played by spatial illusion in Snow's work concludes with an emphatic underlining of the need for criticism to go beyond reductive binary arguments that pit sculpture against cinema, materiality against immateriality and anti-illusionism against illusion.

The three essays in the book's second section, 'Screen', are concerned with the affective impact of gallery films and their spatialization of intersubjective relations. Against the background of a historical consideration of the ways in which the diagnosis of psychopathology has been intertwined with its examination by, and performance for, the camera, Joanna Lowry surveys a group of works by Sam Taylor-Wood, Douglas Gordon, Gillian Wearing, Thomas Struth and Phil Collins, arguing that the viewer's relationship with the screen can restage and interrogate clinical or diagnostic situations and their role in framing subjectivity. Although the works are very different, the argument is, to

- 5 See Annabel Nicolson, Felicity Sparrow, Jane Clarke, Jeanette Iljon, Lis Rhodes, Mary Pat Leece, Pat Murphy and Susan Stein, 'Women and the formal film', in P. Drummond (ed.), *Film as Film, Formal Experiment in Film 1910-75* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979), p. 118.

some extent, a spatialized version of much that has already been said in and about a number of canonical feminist films, including several by Yvonne Rainer. Maria Walsh explores the idea of the 'entranced spectator' in relation to her own experience of viewing Salla Tykkä's *Lasso* (2000). She deploys the notion of trance (detouring through Maya Deren's work) as a way of separating the experience of 'passive' spectatorship from the question of spectacle. The last essay in this section, by Amelia Jones, offers a comparative reading of Carolee Schneemann's *Fuses* (1964-67) and Pipilotti Rist's *Pickelporno* (1992), drawing out historical differences in constructions of sexuality and similarities in style, particularly in the deployment of haptic visuality. The continuities between the contemporary gallery film and the long-standing concerns of feminist film theory and practice that emerge here are striking. In her introductory essay, Trodd admits that this emphasis has entered the book by accident rather than design, an effect of the relatively high numbers of women artists working with these forms (and of women studying them, I would add). I would further suggest that the recurrence of familiar feminist concerns and tropes in so many of the works discussed implies another way of approaching its history, bearing in mind the famous protest of British women filmmakers against the exclusion of women's formal film from the exhibition *Film as Film*.⁵ The strongest historical continuity here may not be around expanded or structural film at all, but in the rigorous exploration of the reflexive capacity of film and video to stage and critique the construction of subjectivity and intersubjective relations.

The essays in the final section of the book, 'Space', tend to confirm this hypothesis. Andrew Uroskie's excellent essay, 'Windows in the white cube', on works by Robert Whitman and Stan Douglas, contains the assertion that:

To understand today's most ambitious work in moving images – work such as Douglas's – it is necessary to examine a genealogy that leads not to structural film, single-channel video, or the so-called sculptural film, but to a less studied body of artist filmmaking which takes up the cinematic image as a support for affective engagement and subjective dislocation. (p. 146)

The notion of the frame as a portal into spatial and temporal alterity is key to Uroskie's argument and to Trodd's own contribution, which develops an architectural rather than sculptural model of film space and then explores the idea of the cinematic apparatus as a desiring machine (another idea that is well established in film theory). The concluding essay in the book, by Christine Ross, follows the logic of space out into Augmented Reality (AR) installations, in which connectivity rather than dislocation is the dominant paradigm. Ross treats interactivity with qualified enthusiasm, even citing Slavoj Žižek's conception of interpassivity (in which the object enjoys the show, thereby relieving the spectator of the duty to do so). Although it seems slightly out of place alongside the other essays in the book, this contribution effectively closes

the collection with another historical or categorical question: where does postcinematic projection end and new media art begin?

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr047

Savas Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: a New Critical History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 319 pp.

EYLEM ATAĞAV

Savas Arslan's book is certainly one of the most significant contributions to English-language literature on the cinema of Turkey. It is a welcome addition to the growing number of publications on the topic, yet what makes it unique is its ambition to address the history of this national cinema in its entirety.¹ Writing the history of a national cinema is a challenging task; writing the history of a national cinema hampered by a lack of archiving and a limited number of resources is even more challenging. A nation's self-knowledge, self-conception and self-understanding need to be taken into account. While acknowledging the existing historiography and criticism of film, and providing an extensive summary of available work on the history of cinema in Turkey, Arslan poses various pertinent questions: 'What is a 'true' national or domestic cinema? How can one pinpoint the truth and essence of a nation and its cinema? Is it possible to realize a national cinema once that nation and its culture dispose of, or eliminate, the foreign influences?' (p. 7). Arslan's monograph successfully meets this challenge and answers these questions.

Cinema in Turkey follows a distinctive and shrewd method of categorizing the history of cinema in Turkey into three eras: pre-Yesilcam cinema until the late 1940s; high-Yesilcam from the 1950s to the 1980s; and post-Yesilcam (or new cinema) from the early 1990s. The chapters examine the reasons behind the popularity of Yesilcam's films (and the characteristics that made them controversial) while questioning Yesilcam's effect on audiences and film in relation to the concepts of nostalgia and collective identity. The book also celebrates plurality and difference. While writing about early cinema in the Ottoman period, Arslan provides the image of an advert for an exhibition by the brothers Milton and Yanaki Manaki in 1911 (p. 32). The poster is in four different languages – French, Ottoman Turkish, Greek and Armenian. This illustrates not only the plurality of nationalities, cultures, and religious and ethnic backgrounds present but also the variety of approaches needed to examine 'Turkish' cinema history. Arslan's approach seems pertinent in that he celebrates difference instead of trying to fit the history of cinema in Turkey under the broad category of 'Turkish'. The volume takes *difference* as its focal point and rather than 'attempting to connect or bridge things' it 'underlines separation', which is argued to be inherent to 'the very *in-betweenness* of Turkey's cinema: '[Turkey] is neither Eastern, nor Western, but both and neither simultaneously. As much as it is about

¹ In recent years there has been a considerable increase in the number of publications on Turkish cinema. See, for instance, Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory* (London: IB Tauris, 2009), and Deniz Bayraktar (ed.), *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and the New Europe* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009).

the collection with another historical or categorical question: where does postcinematic projection end and new media art begin?

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr047

Savas Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: a New Critical History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 319 pp.

EYLEM ATAĞAV

Savas Arslan's book is certainly one of the most significant contributions to English-language literature on the cinema of Turkey. It is a welcome addition to the growing number of publications on the topic, yet what makes it unique is its ambition to address the history of this national cinema in its entirety.¹ Writing the history of a national cinema is a challenging task; writing the history of a national cinema hampered by a lack of archiving and a limited number of resources is even more challenging. A nation's self-knowledge, self-conception and self-understanding need to be taken into account. While acknowledging the existing historiography and criticism of film, and providing an extensive summary of available work on the history of cinema in Turkey, Arslan poses various pertinent questions: 'What is a 'true' national or domestic cinema? How can one pinpoint the truth and essence of a nation and its cinema? Is it possible to realize a national cinema once that nation and its culture dispose of, or eliminate, the foreign influences?' (p. 7). Arslan's monograph successfully meets this challenge and answers these questions.

Cinema in Turkey follows a distinctive and shrewd method of categorizing the history of cinema in Turkey into three eras: pre-Yesilcam cinema until the late 1940s; high-Yesilcam from the 1950s to the 1980s; and post-Yesilcam (or new cinema) from the early 1990s. The chapters examine the reasons behind the popularity of Yesilcam's films (and the characteristics that made them controversial) while questioning Yesilcam's effect on audiences and film in relation to the concepts of nostalgia and collective identity. The book also celebrates plurality and difference. While writing about early cinema in the Ottoman period, Arslan provides the image of an advert for an exhibition by the brothers Milton and Yanaki Manaki in 1911 (p. 32). The poster is in four different languages – French, Ottoman Turkish, Greek and Armenian. This illustrates not only the plurality of nationalities, cultures, and religious and ethnic backgrounds present but also the variety of approaches needed to examine 'Turkish' cinema history. Arslan's approach seems pertinent in that he celebrates difference instead of trying to fit the history of cinema in Turkey under the broad category of 'Turkish'. The volume takes *difference* as its focal point and rather than 'attempting to connect or bridge things' it 'underlines separation', which is argued to be inherent to 'the very *in-betweenness* of Turkey's cinema: '[Turkey] is neither Eastern, nor Western, but both and neither simultaneously. As much as it is about

¹ In recent years there has been a considerable increase in the number of publications on Turkish cinema. See, for instance, Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory* (London: IB Tauris, 2009), and Deniz Bayraktar (ed.), *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and the New Europe* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009).

2 Suner, *New Turkish Cinema*, p. 75.

3 Ibid., p. 75.

connections and similarities, it is also about clashes and differences'. Indeed, throughout the volume Turkey is defined as 'chronically in-between and on the move' (p. x).

There is a familiar rhetoric about 'Turkish' cinema in the writings of scholars who study the cinema of Turkey. For instance, writing about new political films, Asuman Suner has argued that 'Turkish cinema' is a 'classificatory designation because of the emphasis on "Turkishness" that it entails'.² She goes on to suggest that the 'cinema of Turkey' is a more fitting designation as it 'places emphasis not so much on "Turkishness" as ethnic identity, but on Turkey as a geopolitical entity and a locus of divergent ethnic, religious, and cultural identities'.³ Arslan's book analyzes these terms in detail and at the same time attempts to acknowledge differences:

If Yesilcam was a 'Turkish' cinema characterized by Turkifications, nationalism, and the Republican *hayal* and *ozenti*, what has come to be termed new 'Turkish cinema' has the capacity to be more of the 'new cinema of Turkey' rather than a cinema limited to and defined by its 'Turkishness'. (p. 19)

Thus Arslan moves from a limiting and rather nationalistic framework to an understanding that focuses on multiplicities and pluralities, at the same time acknowledging possible transnational and global characteristics of contemporary cinema in Turkey. In discussing Yesilcam and nationality he focuses on the following notions: Turkification, *hayal* (imagination), melodramatic modality and *ozenti* (imitation). Within this conceptual framework the volume analyzes a representative sample of the cinema of Turkey by discussing a variety of genres, from tear-jerkers to low-budget action adventures. Arslan provides a social, political and historical analysis of the three periods of cinema in Turkey and applies these concepts to each period. He argues, for instance, that the notion of *hayal* was crucial in unifying 'all the multiplicities of a country under a single, unitary national umbrella' in the early 1920s, within the pre-Yesilcam period (p. 18). One of the discussions in the book, which is key to the study of national cinema, is the thought-provoking section entitled 'Dubbing: (mis)translation, (re)writing, and "Turkification"' (p. 47), in which the author makes links to colonialist ideas and provides a discussion of the ways in which films are made more 'national' through dubbing. According to Arslan, cinema developed in Turkey by interweaving two screens, the traditional and the modern, the realistic and the spectral:

the history of Yesilcam, as it attempted to be a 'small' Hollywood, also appends a dream of making films similar to those of Western cinemas. This Western medium in a non-Western land, brought about its own particularities and peculiarities through practices of translation, transformation and restitution. (p. 18)

He argues that during the dubbing process foreign films were *Turkified* through a series of modifications or excisions of characters, dialogue and storylines. *Ozenti*, he claims, is a significant notion, and readily applicable

to more recent discussions about ‘ethnic identities, reform programs initiated toward full membership in the European Union’ within the post-Yesilcam period (p. 19). Indeed, the concept of imitating the West proves significant in Turkey’s history, as in Turkey the West has been associated, since Ataturk and the birth of the Republic in 1923, with the idea of modernity. All the positive change that occurred, since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, in the name of modernization has typically been attributed to western contact.

I particularly value the section in the book on the industrial context and mode of production of 1970s cinema in Turkey, as this is a significant period during which picture houses started showing three films in a row, including sex comedies and cheap pornographic productions. In fact, according to Nilgun Abisel, this was a period when things were ‘all going wrong’ for Turkish cinema:

It is in these years when the decline in the number of cinema audiences was strongly felt. The cinema houses in towns started closing down slowly one after another. Cinemas in the big cities followed these. ... The closure of these picture-houses, in return, led to a loss in the number of cinemagoers ... Fewer films are made. Management of those cinemas, which showed cheap productions and *bad* films, by considering the poor quality of the audience at the time, did not bother to refurbish these buildings. Consequently, cinemas turned into cold, dirty spaces with broken seats and faulty projection machines, in which ‘certain’ groups of audience were fulfilling their ‘certain’ needs.⁴

Arslan sheds light on this rather neglected period under the heading ‘Sexploitation films’, whilst applying existing theories of pornography (there is substantial reference to Linda Williams’s work in this section) to the 1970s films. Indeed, existing volumes on the history of Turkish cinema tend to neglect this crucial aspect of sex films.⁵

Overall, according to Arslan, *hayal*, *Turkification* and *ozenti* underpin Yesilcam’s workings and help us understand the history and construction of its filmic texts. This book is a significant contribution to the scholarly work on the history of cinema in Turkey and I have no doubt that it will become one of the canonical English-language texts.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr043

Kathleen Rowe Karlyn: *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011, 322 pp.

SUSAN BERRIDGE

The analysis of screen representations of women has been a central concern of feminist media scholarship since its inception, and Kathleen Rowe Karlyn’s *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers*, focusing on mainstream film

4 Nilgün Abisel, *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar* [Writings on Turkish Cinema] (Ankara: Imge Yayınevi, 1994), p. 114. My emphasis, my translation.

5 The volume also touches on the topic of women and women filmmakers in Turkish cinema. Here, however, rather than revealing a new approach (as it does in reframing and rethinking 1970s films and cinema), it seems to repeat what is available.

to more recent discussions about ‘ethnic identities, reform programs initiated toward full membership in the European Union’ within the post-Yesilcam period (p. 19). Indeed, the concept of imitating the West proves significant in Turkey’s history, as in Turkey the West has been associated, since Ataturk and the birth of the Republic in 1923, with the idea of modernity. All the positive change that occurred, since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, in the name of modernization has typically been attributed to western contact.

I particularly value the section in the book on the industrial context and mode of production of 1970s cinema in Turkey, as this is a significant period during which picture houses started showing three films in a row, including sex comedies and cheap pornographic productions. In fact, according to Nilgun Abisel, this was a period when things were ‘all going wrong’ for Turkish cinema:

It is in these years when the decline in the number of cinema audiences was strongly felt. The cinema houses in towns started closing down slowly one after another. Cinemas in the big cities followed these. ... The closure of these picture-houses, in return, led to a loss in the number of cinemagoers ... Fewer films are made. Management of those cinemas, which showed cheap productions and *bad* films, by considering the poor quality of the audience at the time, did not bother to refurbish these buildings. Consequently, cinemas turned into cold, dirty spaces with broken seats and faulty projection machines, in which ‘certain’ groups of audience were fulfilling their ‘certain’ needs.⁴

Arslan sheds light on this rather neglected period under the heading ‘Sexploitation films’, whilst applying existing theories of pornography (there is substantial reference to Linda Williams’s work in this section) to the 1970s films. Indeed, existing volumes on the history of Turkish cinema tend to neglect this crucial aspect of sex films.⁵

Overall, according to Arslan, *hayal*, *Turkification* and *ozenti* underpin Yesilcam’s workings and help us understand the history and construction of its filmic texts. This book is a significant contribution to the scholarly work on the history of cinema in Turkey and I have no doubt that it will become one of the canonical English-language texts.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr043

Kathleen Rowe Karlyn: *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011, 322 pp.

SUSAN BERRIDGE

The analysis of screen representations of women has been a central concern of feminist media scholarship since its inception, and Kathleen Rowe Karlyn’s *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers*, focusing on mainstream film

4 Nilgün Abisel, *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar* [Writings on Turkish Cinema] (Ankara: Imge Yayınevi, 1994), p. 114. My emphasis, my translation.

5 The volume also touches on the topic of women and women filmmakers in Turkish cinema. Here, however, rather than revealing a new approach (as it does in reframing and rethinking 1970s films and cinema), it seems to repeat what is available.

and televisual representations of mother–daughter relationships from the past two decades, is no exception. What makes this book stand out, however, is Rowe Karlyn’s thoughtful treatment of the subject. Towards the end of the book she reflects upon her motivation to explore these cross-generational female relationships, explaining that as a mother of daughters herself she wished to engage with the texts they loved through their eyes (p. 256). Thus the majority of the material she examines is aimed at a much younger audience, for example *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995), *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001), *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), the *Scream* films (Wes Craven, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2011) and the television series *My So-Called Life* (1994–95). However, while acknowledging the disidentity between herself and the intended audience of these texts, she demonstrates a genuine commitment to engage with these films and series on their own merits rather than looking only at what they have to offer an adult feminist. This makes a welcome change from the pedagogic advice mode that characterizes much contemporary feminist media scholarship on female representation, concerned as it often is with designating the appropriate role models for young female viewers, assuming this audience to be more susceptible to screen imagery than adults and thus in need of guidance on how and what to watch.

Although Rowe Karlyn attempts to examine these texts through her daughters’ eyes, this is not to suggest that she uncritically celebrates each of the films and series that they love. Popular culture and feminism have an uneasy relationship and Rowe Karlyn shares this discomfort, observing that many mainstream female representations reveal an age-old ambivalence surrounding mothers, motherhood and mother–daughter relationships (p. 3). She states that the book’s aim is ‘to consider the ways feminism has absorbed this ambivalence when, in renewing itself, it has distanced itself from the generations that preceded it, thereby replicating that very misogyny it wishes to eradicate’ (p. 4).

She uses her analysis of these representations of mother–daughter relationships to gesture to broader debates surrounding generational conflicts between second-wave feminists and third-wave and postfeminists. Although there is no consensus on what postfeminism or third-wave feminism actually entails, the two are both differentiated from second-wave feminism, often seen as the ‘other’ by younger women who falsely demonize the earlier generation for repressing all sense of difference between women and for being excessively hostile. Rowe Karlyn is careful not to pin all the blame for these divisions on younger feminists, however. She also observes that many second-wave feminists perpetuate the sense of disidentity between themselves and younger women by refusing to engage seriously with new models of femininity and feminism. It is this that she seeks to rectify. She argues that in order for feminism to remain relevant these scholars need to understand popular culture and incorporate their analyses into feminist debates. Thus, rather than amplify generational differences, her aim is to reflect upon the relationship between feminism and popular culture and, through doing so,

open up a cross-generational conversation between women. It is this openness, thoughtfulness and rigour that afford her book its power.

Analyzing a wide range of contemporary film and television programmes, spanning genres such as horror, teen, melodrama and romantic comedy, Rowe Karlyn is able to trace recurring tropes in how cross-generational female relationships are portrayed, using detailed case studies of individual films and television series to illustrate her arguments. To avoid over-generalizing from specific examples, she reinforces these with references to several other texts, revealing a breadth of close viewing. At times she treads on well-worn territory – for example with her analysis of *Buffy*, a text much discussed by feminist scholars – but for the most part she manages to bring fresh insights to each example.

Unruly Girls is a continuation of her 1995 book *The Unruly Woman*, in which she examined female representations that openly defied patriarchal hegemony by refusing to conform to feminine norms.¹ In stark contrast, the unruly girls that Rowe Karlyn identifies in her most recent book embrace femininity and potentially, therefore, pose less of a challenge to patriarchy. But she does not simply dismiss these more recent female depictions as straightforwardly regressive. She acknowledges that the period she is examining – a time characterized by the arrival of girl power, third-wave feminism and a shift towards conservatism – is different from the period she explored previously, and she describes these depictions as ‘an expression of unruliness for a new age’ (p. 4). She is less optimistic about the figure of the unrepentant mother, which is much less prominent in these contemporary texts. As she illustrates, this figure is typically portrayed through the eyes of younger women and is rarely presented as a desirable option, instead being commonly depicted as humourless, ineffectual or altogether absent.

The book’s real achievement is its recognition of the complexities and ambiguities inherent to media representations of femininity and feminism. Much feminist scholarship of female-fronted films and television series is concerned with categorizing individual female representations as positive or negative, feminist or sexist. Underlying this work is an assumption that texts and their heroines are either governed by a patriarchal, inherently sexist ideology or are able to transcend this to incorporate feminist discourses. An example of this tendency is identified by Charlotte Brunsdon in what she calls the ‘ur feminist’ article.² In brief, Brunsdon describes how the feminist scholar selects a female-fronted text that is aimed at a female audience and explores it within the concerns and vocabulary of feminism, establishing a supposedly obvious feminist reading in which the text/heroine are dismissed as not being feminist enough. The author then mobilizes her own engagement with the text and reevaluates this dismissal, arguing that the text/heroine actually reveal the complexities of negotiating a feminist identity in the contemporary age. Regardless of whether the feminist scholar celebrates or condemns an individual text/heroine, the polemical question that prevails is of how feminist the text/heroine is. This assumes that there is a ‘better’ way of representing women and feminist issues. One of the main

1 Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and Genres of Laughter* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995).

2 Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘The feminist in the kitchen: Martha, Martha and Nigella’, in Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley (eds), *Feminism in Popular Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), p. 44.

- 3 Karen Boyle, 'Feminism without men: feminist media studies in a post-feminist age', in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (eds), *Mass Media and Society* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 38.

problems with this assumption is that it presumes a 'real', fixed, common notion of feminism, while the existence of an array of different feminisms make this argument rather circuitous.

Rowe Karlyn is much less interested in measuring whether the films and series that she examines conform to her own definition of feminism and is more concerned to explore the *kinds* of stories enabled about mother–daughter relationships and female intergenerational relationships more widely. When analyzing depictions of women, she thus avoids rigid positive/negative binaries and instead pays close attention to fissures in each text, drawing out moments or specific characters or performances that may offer more challenging understandings of the intergenerational relationships. This does not mean that she evades judgement altogether – she condemns the treatment of the mother in *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) while praising *Antonia's Line* (Marleen Gorris, 1995) for offering a more progressive representation of mother–daughter relationships, for example. At the same time she is careful to acknowledge polysemic readings of each text; moreover, she pays attention to how medium specificity, narrative form and genre intersect with these representations, altering how they are framed. This rigorous attention to textual ambiguity and complexity is a real strength of the book.

Underpinning *Unruly Girls* is a firm belief that representations matter. While Rowe Karlyn certainly does not say that contemporary depictions of mother–daughter relationships are reflective of reality, she does suggest that they are generative and productive, and thus have the capacity to inform and educate. One of this book's main insights is into the lack of solidarity between women of different generations represented in mainstream film and television series. In turn, this lack of solidarity is reflected in contemporary feminist media scholarship. As Karen Boyle warns, 'much recent feminist media studies presents a feminism at war with itself and the political relevance of feminism is in danger of being lost'.³ With this book, Rowe Karlyn takes steps to end this war. Feminism never has been nor should be a monolithic entity. The real differences between women promote exciting and illuminating discussion. The most valuable contribution of Rowe Karlyn's book is her commitment to fostering a meaningful dialogue between second-wave, third-wave and postfeminist women, without losing sight of, or smoothing over, generational differences.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr045

Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's Quest and its Charge*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 152 pp.

LEE CARRUTHERS

Dudley Andrew's *What Cinema Is!* is a salutary event for film studies, and for contemporary film theory in particular. The latest installment in

problems with this assumption is that it presumes a 'real', fixed, common notion of feminism, while the existence of an array of different feminisms make this argument rather circuitous.

Rowe Karlyn is much less interested in measuring whether the films and series that she examines conform to her own definition of feminism and is more concerned to explore the *kinds* of stories enabled about mother–daughter relationships and female intergenerational relationships more widely. When analyzing depictions of women, she thus avoids rigid positive/negative binaries and instead pays close attention to fissures in each text, drawing out moments or specific characters or performances that may offer more challenging understandings of the intergenerational relationships. This does not mean that she evades judgement altogether – she condemns the treatment of the mother in *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) while praising *Antonia's Line* (Marleen Gorris, 1995) for offering a more progressive representation of mother–daughter relationships, for example. At the same time she is careful to acknowledge polysemic readings of each text; moreover, she pays attention to how medium specificity, narrative form and genre intersect with these representations, altering how they are framed. This rigorous attention to textual ambiguity and complexity is a real strength of the book.

Underpinning *Unruly Girls* is a firm belief that representations matter. While Rowe Karlyn certainly does not say that contemporary depictions of mother–daughter relationships are reflective of reality, she does suggest that they are generative and productive, and thus have the capacity to inform and educate. One of this book's main insights is into the lack of solidarity between women of different generations represented in mainstream film and television series. In turn, this lack of solidarity is reflected in contemporary feminist media scholarship. As Karen Boyle warns, 'much recent feminist media studies presents a feminism at war with itself and the political relevance of feminism is in danger of being lost'.³ With this book, Rowe Karlyn takes steps to end this war. Feminism never has been nor should be a monolithic entity. The real differences between women promote exciting and illuminating discussion. The most valuable contribution of Rowe Karlyn's book is her commitment to fostering a meaningful dialogue between second-wave, third-wave and postfeminist women, without losing sight of, or smoothing over, generational differences.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr045

Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's Quest and its Charge*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 152 pp.

LEE CARRUTHERS

Dudley Andrew's *What Cinema Is!* is a salutary event for film studies, and for contemporary film theory in particular. The latest installment in

3 Karen Boyle, 'Feminism without men: feminist media studies in a post-feminist age', in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (eds), *Mass Media and Society* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 38.

1 Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Dudley Andrew and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (eds), *Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory and its Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Blackwell's Manifesto series, the book is a meditation on the tenor and tasks of film study as explored through the writings of André Bazin. As such, it serves as a long-awaited axis for the renewed interest in Bazin that has stirred in recent years. More precisely, it is a provocative invitation to all readers to return to Bazin – and to read him differently.

Andrew's book can be situated, conveniently enough, between two other publications that the author has produced: first, his early biographical account of Bazin, published over three decades ago and reprinted in 1990; more recently, a new collection of essays, edited by Andrew with the French film scholar Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, which examines Bazin's sources and significance for the contemporary context.¹ Framed in this way, *What Cinema Is!* appears as a text that is more concise and, in a certain sense, more urgent than these; underpinned by the first book's biographical insights, Andrew's arguments are an acute distillation of years of additional research sparked by lively scholarly engagement.

My first encounter with the research that animates *What Cinema Is!* was in December 2004, as an attendee of the Chicago Film Seminar. In a talk called 'Philosophers and the soul of cinema, circa 1945', Andrew drew a detailed picture of the philosophical terrain that nourished Bazin's thought, with attention to a special research discovery, Bazin's annotated copy of Sartre's *L'Imaginaire*. This fascinating find served as the germ for the present volume, and its insights were subsequently expanded and developed in discussions across several institutional contexts: a series of doctoral seminars at Yale, a conference at the Université Paris Diderot (2008), and colloquia held at the University of Toronto (2004) and York University (2009).

It would be a mistake to diminish the distinctive features of *What Cinema Is!* by highlighting only its productive accord with related publications. Instead it seems right to emphasize the singularity of Andrew's book rather than its sameness: it is an admirably lucid, brief and, perhaps for these very reasons, somewhat idiosyncratic text whose conceptual compactness will both attract and challenge readers. Freed of the dense footnoting and specialized language that characterizes much academic writing, Andrew's arguments proceed with a kind of rhetorical freshness that feels – appropriately – Bazinian. And the book, despite its brevity, pursues multiple scholarly tasks: it functions at once as a rich elucidation of Bazin; a considered work of film theory; an intervention for film studies; and, in its delineation of various filmic examples, a model of heartfelt criticism.

Primarily, and invaluabley, *What Cinema Is!* continues the work of the early biography by its unpacking of Bazin's varied intellectual sources, showing such connections to infuse and clarify the foundational features of his thought. Tracing significant philosophical affinities with the ideas of André Malraux and Edgar Morin, Andrew also highlights the penetrating influence of Jean Paul Sartre, some important correlations with Walter Benjamin, and the intriguing impact of Surrealism on Bazin's thought, via Breton, Bataille and Dali. New for many readers will be the

author's delineation of the rapport between Bazin and the French critic Serge Daney. An enormously compelling critical voice, and in many ways Bazin's true heir at *Cahiers du cinéma*, Daney's commentary stands as a particularly resonant feature of Andrew's text and merits further consideration.

From these diverse points of contact emerges an enriched understanding of Bazin that sharpens the recognized contours of his commentary while disclosing its neglected depths. Specifically the author directs us to the structuring tensions of Bazin's writings, as articulated within the essay 'Pour un cinéma impur' (familiarily translated as 'In defence of mixed cinema'), written in 1952. In his elaboration of the essay, Andrew moves beyond the well-known terrain of cinematic ontology to uncover the deep duality of Bazin's thought, crystallized in this grounding text. To this end, Andrew proposes what he calls the 'ontogeny' of cinema (p. 110), a parallel (though eventually asymptomatic) formulation that speaks to cinema's mode of dynamic mediation – or, in other words, the medium's modernist messiness, its openness to experience and transformation, and, profoundly, its way of being historical. As the author frames it, where the question of cinema's ontology assumes an inward focus, seeking the medium's essential properties, cinematic ontogeny reflects its engagement with the world, reaching out to other cultural forms and, crucially, to the critical quandaries of the present. Andrew writes:

Cinema here is examined not by looking inward at its cellular makeup, but, rather, outward toward its place relative to the arts around it. Should it position itself in open territory unoccupied by the arts before it, or should it conspire with them in a tangled cultural field? Bazin felt no contradiction in these two directions of his thought. Like any living form, cinema must adapt to conditions around it, sacrificing its putative self-identity (its ontology) as it matures into the shape it takes on in history (its adaptations). Along the way it acquires affiliations and vocations, just as people do. (p. 112)

Thus a central aim of *What Cinema Is!* is to bring out the 'impurity' of Bazin's thought in order to demonstrate its continued vitality for the contemporary context. This revised emphasis effects an important shift that is meaningful for ongoing theoretical practice; it shatters any lingering notion that Bazin's thought is somehow *pre-theoretical*, essentially conservative or nostalgic, bound to a simpler time and language. Indeed, this broadened, ontogenic perspective understands cinema, via Bazin, as forward-looking and resistant to easy conceptualization. Its character can be discerned, however, through a series of supple metaphors, each offering a powerful framework. Consider, for example, the enlarged possibilities of cinema as a series of ellipses (rather than evidence), as filter (rather than frame) as absence (rather than presence). The idea here is not to replace old conceptual schemes with new ones, of course; rather, *What Cinema Is!* asks us to

2 On related disciplinary questions, see Dudley Andrew, 'The core and the flow of film studies', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 4 (2009), pp. 879-915.

contemplate the reciprocal tension that joins one to the other, and the holistic understanding of cinema that this engenders. So Andrew's text performs a dual function, and adroitly: it insists that we acknowledge Bazin's thinking in its fullness and complexity, then it presents a range of unsung formulations whose appeal to readers is to take up Bazin's 'quest' (and its charge) as a generative framework for the future.

Though Andrew's text argues for a conception of cinema that stresses its mutability, this does not result in any blurring of rhetorical purpose. In fact, *What Cinema Is!* operates most effectively as a manifesto, engaging contemporary debates, reflecting not just upon cinema but also the terms of its academic consideration.² The author asserts a way forward for film studies, naming its essential concerns and potential pitfalls, as follows:

this drive to understand the workings of the fiction film – is precious. To have this subsumed by some larger notion of audiovisions, to have it dissipate into the foggy field of cultural studies, say, or become one testing ground among others for communication studies, would be to lose something whose value has always derived from the intensity and focus that films invite and sometimes demand. (p. xvii)

However one receives these arguments, one cannot help but admire their directness – and, more pointedly, their underlying insistence that cinema's quality of openness should not be confused with a failure of specificity, nor taken as the inevitable ground for the medium's obsolescence. Instead it means that cinema is harder to think about, and less easily contained by fixed explanatory frameworks. We might say that cinema *gets away from us*, and thus demands more from viewers and critics.

This sense of cinema's difficulty and reward extends to Andrew's ambitious discussion of *écriture* and adaptation that concludes the volume, advancing both a complex figure for cinema's protean processes and, tacitly, a call for genuine film writing. And it is here that the strengths of *What Cinema Is!* also appear as limitations. This final chapter pursues an array of astonishing linkages, moving swiftly from Bazin to Ricoeur, Bresson to Bernanos, and through a welter of topics (adaptation to hermeneutics to authorship to credit sequences to religious iconography). The range of this material is not particularly well served by the book's compact format; one wishes not just for a longer discussion but for a more generous presentation of these ideas and their interconnection in order to admire such intricacies more fully.

But to encounter a book that perhaps provides 'too much' to think about is an agreeable dilemma. Significantly, the tangle of ideas with which *What Cinema Is!* concludes is well fitted to the book's central claims, underscoring the irreducible nature of cinema itself. Like Bazin, Andrew invites his readers to proceed with the benefit of a receptive attitude rather than any single doctrine, assuming a stance of 'curiosity, spontaneity, and responsiveness' (p. 94) towards cinema and the world it (partially) reflects. This attitude is formed by a deep acknowledgement of the elusive powers of cinema – and, more keenly, the concomitant need to answer to

it, in recognition of the challenge and boundless nature of this responsibility.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr046

Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 281 pp.

MARIA A. VELEZ-SERNA

More than a decade has passed since this journal highlighted the ‘cross-fertilization’ that was taking place between the fields of film studies and geography, with a special issue on ‘Space/Place/City and Film’.¹ The interest that the editors had identified has continued to flourish and to set the background to diverse research projects. In the British context, one of the most successful and well-disseminated of these projects was ‘A city in film: Liverpool’s urban landscape and the moving image’, based at the University of Liverpool from 2006 to 2010. Edited after the completion of the first stage of that project, Richard Koeck and Les Roberts’s *The City and the Moving Image* brings together scholars from film and architecture backgrounds in a collection of case studies which eschew the usual suspects (such as film noir) for a startlingly varied and original range of material.

Broadly speaking, explorations into the relationship between the city and the moving image have taken two distinct methodological routes, informed by a familiar divide in film and television studies between textual and extratextual emphases. The idea of cinema as ‘a quintessentially *urban* set of practices’, introduced on the first page of this book, is contentious amongst cinema historians but has proved fruitful as an approach to the analysis of film space and narrative. Most of the essays in this collection are concerned with the cinematic presences of particular cities – not only Paris, London and Berlin, but also Dachau, Nice, Detroit and, of course, Liverpool. This exploration of different locales is stimulating because it stems from a concrete, detailed engagement with these towns rather than an abstract notion of the modern metropolis. The fact that only a couple of the chapters mention commercial feature films suggests that using place as the focus of investigation can open up a range of relevant cinematic materials, providing new talking points that need not touch on notions of quality or authorship. There is a refreshing eclecticism in the kinds of film covered in this book, from promotional films for a cruise line to the artist’s films of Tacita Dean and the mildly politicized amateur films discussed by Ryan Shand. Such variety produces uneven results, and the relative obscurity of many of the films discussed means that readers will probably not have seen them – but might well be prompted to seek them out after reading the rich, perceptive descriptions provided by some of the authors. The four articles in the second part of the

¹ *Screen*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1999), ed. Karen Lury and Doreen Massey.

it, in recognition of the challenge and boundless nature of this responsibility.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr046

Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 281 pp.

MARIA A. VELEZ-SERNA

More than a decade has passed since this journal highlighted the ‘cross-fertilization’ that was taking place between the fields of film studies and geography, with a special issue on ‘Space/Place/City and Film’.¹ The interest that the editors had identified has continued to flourish and to set the background to diverse research projects. In the British context, one of the most successful and well-disseminated of these projects was ‘A city in film: Liverpool’s urban landscape and the moving image’, based at the University of Liverpool from 2006 to 2010. Edited after the completion of the first stage of that project, Richard Koeck and Les Roberts’s *The City and the Moving Image* brings together scholars from film and architecture backgrounds in a collection of case studies which eschew the usual suspects (such as film noir) for a startlingly varied and original range of material.

Broadly speaking, explorations into the relationship between the city and the moving image have taken two distinct methodological routes, informed by a familiar divide in film and television studies between textual and extratextual emphases. The idea of cinema as ‘a quintessentially *urban* set of practices’, introduced on the first page of this book, is contentious amongst cinema historians but has proved fruitful as an approach to the analysis of film space and narrative. Most of the essays in this collection are concerned with the cinematic presences of particular cities – not only Paris, London and Berlin, but also Dachau, Nice, Detroit and, of course, Liverpool. This exploration of different locales is stimulating because it stems from a concrete, detailed engagement with these towns rather than an abstract notion of the modern metropolis. The fact that only a couple of the chapters mention commercial feature films suggests that using place as the focus of investigation can open up a range of relevant cinematic materials, providing new talking points that need not touch on notions of quality or authorship. There is a refreshing eclecticism in the kinds of film covered in this book, from promotional films for a cruise line to the artist’s films of Tacita Dean and the mildly politicized amateur films discussed by Ryan Shand. Such variety produces uneven results, and the relative obscurity of many of the films discussed means that readers will probably not have seen them – but might well be prompted to seek them out after reading the rich, perceptive descriptions provided by some of the authors. The four articles in the second part of the

¹ *Screen*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1999), ed. Karen Lury and Doreen Massey.

book, 'Landscapes of Memory and Absence', are particularly successful in transcending the section's vague title through well-written, evocative accounts of both cinematic and actual spatial experiences.

It is precisely that intersection between types of urban experience that underpins the central themes of the book, so that within the diversity of perspectives and objects of study an ethical stand seems to emerge. The introduction outlines the need for a critique of 'technocratic modes of urban representation' and proposes to explore 'the potential for an *anti-spectacular* aesthetic of the city in film' (p. 6). These ideas signal the alliance of this branch of film studies with the ideas of Guy Debord and the *Internationale Situationiste*, and with psychogeographical practice and writing. At the heart of this discussion is a rejection of the instrumental commoditization of urban spaces, through both the social engineering of town planning and the displacement of lived communal experience by sanitized, spectacular architecture or sanitized, spectacular visual discourses. This argument is compellingly articulated in Alan Marcus's reflection on his own film work about Dachau, which interrogates the city's attempts at rebranding through a paradoxical disavowal of its main 'tourist attraction', namely the remains of the concentration camp. Equally absorbing and topical is Paul Newland's essay on Emily Richardson's experimental films *Transit* (2006) and *Memo Mori* (2009), which record and memorialize the parts of East London earmarked for redevelopment in advance of the 2012 Olympic Games.

As Newland observes, the films are perched between critique and nostalgia, and this is a line frequently trod by 'topophilic' filmmakers as well as scholars. The risk lies in romanticizing working-class neighbourhood life as 'authentic' while magnifying the power and single-mindedness of urban planners to conspiratorial dimensions. With its references to Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, Newland's chapter points to some of the main intellectual influences behind this book's approach – but these philosophers of everyday life are at the most tractable end of the urban theory spectrum. The prologues to the four sections of the book, as well as the general introduction, are unfortunate examples of the kind of dense prose that has fallen out of favour in film studies but seems to still thrive among architects. Yet one of the most concrete and suggestive ideas in this book comes from an urban studies perspective: in an insight that will surely be useful for a few grant applications in years to come, Robert Kronenburg suggests that archive film is 'a resource of unique visual information about how cities were used in the past', which can be used to inform contemporary urban design (p. 223).

The idea that City Council bureaucrats will sit patiently through hours of amateur footage may be wishful thinking, but at least it suggests that film – and film scholarship – can aspire to influence the direction of social change. Student occupations, millionaires' golf clubs, and the eviction of entire communities to make way for Olympic pools and Commonwealth velodromes remind us that urban space is a political issue. As a central

interest in film studies, the experience of city life and its spaces can lead to more grounded, historicized analysis and a political reinvigoration of the discipline. This book contains promising glimpses of such an engagement, and showcases some of the myriad forms it might take.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr042

Ian Christie, *The Art of Film: John Box and Production Design*. London: Wallflower, 2009, 208 pp.

PIERS BRITTON

This volume outlining the career of John Box has undoubted intrinsic worth, vividly commemorating as it does the work of a prolific and exceedingly able British production designer. Yet in many respects Ian Christie's monograph is interesting as much for the conceptual problems it raises as for the data it provides.

To write an artist monograph on a film production designer is inevitably to court paradox. There is a durable industry truism (curiously endorsed in much academic writing on the subject) that a designer's work should be self-effacing – that the audience should never come out of the movie theatre humming the sets, and that design which calls attention to itself and its inventors is somehow disruptive to a film's narrative coherence. In principle, 'star designers' are therefore by institutional definition either unthinkable or aberrant. Yet public accolades alone might well seem to justify placing John Box in the 'star' category: in the course of his career he earned four BAFTAs and as many Oscars, garnered an OBE, and is renowned for his long-standing association with David Lean.

Although Box's near contemporary Ken Adam is by normative standards certainly no more distinguished, he has eclipsed Box in popular consciousness over the course of the last two decades. Indeed, Adam now embodies the notion of 'star designer', at least in Britain, and one useful function of Christie's book – seemingly not fortuitous – is to offset this. Even Christie's title reads like a deliberate challenge to *The Art of Production Design*, Christopher Frayling's sprawling, interview-based account of Adam.¹ Christie does not find it necessary to claim on the jacket of his book, as Frayling does of his subject, that Box was ever the world's greatest designer. The absence of such hyperbole is gratifying, as is Christie's pointed comment that production design should not be 'equated with spectacular sets and the sketches that suggest they have sprung from a single imagination' (p. 1).

Yet, to an extent, Christie protests too much. As an idiom the monograph, unless very carefully framed, de facto obscures the complex ways in which designers operate within the institutional structures of film and television (just as monographs on 'fine artists' have historically obscured the web of economic interdependencies and the intertexts that

¹ Christopher Frayling, *Ken Adam and the Art of Production Design* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005).

interest in film studies, the experience of city life and its spaces can lead to more grounded, historicized analysis and a political reinvigoration of the discipline. This book contains promising glimpses of such an engagement, and showcases some of the myriad forms it might take.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr042

Ian Christie, *The Art of Film: John Box and Production Design*. London: Wallflower, 2009, 208 pp.

PIERS BRITTON

This volume outlining the career of John Box has undoubted intrinsic worth, vividly commemorating as it does the work of a prolific and exceedingly able British production designer. Yet in many respects Ian Christie's monograph is interesting as much for the conceptual problems it raises as for the data it provides.

To write an artist monograph on a film production designer is inevitably to court paradox. There is a durable industry truism (curiously endorsed in much academic writing on the subject) that a designer's work should be self-effacing – that the audience should never come out of the movie theatre humming the sets, and that design which calls attention to itself and its inventors is somehow disruptive to a film's narrative coherence. In principle, 'star designers' are therefore by institutional definition either unthinkable or aberrant. Yet public accolades alone might well seem to justify placing John Box in the 'star' category: in the course of his career he earned four BAFTAs and as many Oscars, garnered an OBE, and is renowned for his long-standing association with David Lean.

Although Box's near contemporary Ken Adam is by normative standards certainly no more distinguished, he has eclipsed Box in popular consciousness over the course of the last two decades. Indeed, Adam now embodies the notion of 'star designer', at least in Britain, and one useful function of Christie's book – seemingly not fortuitous – is to offset this. Even Christie's title reads like a deliberate challenge to *The Art of Production Design*, Christopher Frayling's sprawling, interview-based account of Adam.¹ Christie does not find it necessary to claim on the jacket of his book, as Frayling does of his subject, that Box was ever the world's greatest designer. The absence of such hyperbole is gratifying, as is Christie's pointed comment that production design should not be 'equated with spectacular sets and the sketches that suggest they have sprung from a single imagination' (p. 1).

Yet, to an extent, Christie protests too much. As an idiom the monograph, unless very carefully framed, de facto obscures the complex ways in which designers operate within the institutional structures of film and television (just as monographs on 'fine artists' have historically obscured the web of economic interdependencies and the intertexts that

¹ Christopher Frayling, *Ken Adam and the Art of Production Design* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005).

conditioned the production and reception of their work). No matter how earnest the disclaimers concerning designers' willing subordination to script and director, no matter how strong the insistence that mise-en-scene does not spring from a single imagination, monography inherently perpetuates the idea that individual talent or personal style transcend specific historical circumstances. While long-term collaborators – such as Box's frequent art director in the 1960s, Terence Marsh – may, so to speak, garner supporting roles in the drama of a production designer's career story, transitory collaborators or interpreters are necessarily marginalized or occluded. Indeed, in Christie's book even Marsh's contribution to the Box *oeuvre* is at best summarily sketched, while other regular art directors working under him, such as Bob Laing, and set decorators, such as Dario Simoni, are essentially only name-checked.

There are more specific problems with the critical positioning of any production designer whose prestige is, for better or worse, linked with a famous director. Box's relative celebrity is in large measure a function of his work with David Lean, just as Ken Adam's fame is in part dependent on his work with Kubrick (as well as his extensive contribution to Eon Films' *James Bond 007* series). This dependency structures *The Art of Film* in unusually tangible ways. Box's association with Lean suffuses the volume not only in terms of narrative and illustrations but also in the very fact of its existence, for a contribution from The David Lean Foundation is credited as generously assisting the book's publication. Perversely, while making claims for the significance of Box's work as a total *oeuvre*, *The Art of Film* in effect yokes this significance to Box's relationship with Lean, with whom he in fact made only three pictures. It is all too easy to assume that work with a distinguished director represents a designer's best work, but as various designers have said to me in interview, such an assumption does not necessarily correspond with their understanding of the challenges and pleasures of their craft.

I do not wish to minimize the value of *any* volume that adds to the body of available resources on production design, which remain relatively scant in spite of the exponential increase of essays and book-length studies during the last decade. There is a certainly much to be learnt from Christie's study. His book offers a concise record of Box's working experience, avowedly based on Box's and his colleagues' testimony; it is amply and effectively illustrated and beautifully designed, and it even contains a short but sensible appendix which summarizes the state of the field of scholarly inquiry into production design. Yet the pitfalls of monography loom large here. Part of the reason for this is that the book suffers from an unsteady conceptual framework: Christie does not offer sustained critical analysis, but neither is *The Art of Film* simply a record of Box's work and words. By default this means that the book ends up as a slightly bland celebration of Box, in spite of the author's disclaimer that the purpose of the volume is not per se 'to praise him' (and in fact Christie tellingly undercuts this disclaimer by going on to say that the book 'can hardly avoid' such praise) (p. 3).

The actual organization of *The Art of Film* reflects its equivocal nature as not-quite memoir and not-quite analysis. Chapters chronologically tracking Box's career alternate with 'Close-ups', each focusing on one of the films discussed in the preceding chapter. (In almost every case the chosen film is predictably either an award-winner or one of Box's collaborations with Lean.) While the change of lens in these interludes seems intended to allow for detailed analysis, the Close-ups often incline to the anecdotal and descriptive rather than the discursive, their chief difference from the main chapters being the absence of biographical material or other surrounding historical information. For instance, the chapter entitled 'A case of conscience' is almost entirely devoted to *A Man for All Seasons* (Fred Zinnemann), situating the production of the 1966 film in relation to its troubled, cash-guzzling, Columbia stablemate, *Casino Royale* (Val Guest, 1967), and dwelling extensively on the content of Robert Bolt's original play and its reception. The following Close-up ruminates usefully on the austere, stylized world which Box and his colleagues created for the film, offering a case study in Box's deliberate espousal of chromatic clarity and textural restraint (which is marred by the unfortunate title for the Close-up, 'Cut-price Tudor'). Yet it is hard to see why this material is divorced from the 'main' chapter, which in retrospect seems like an overlong preamble. Although the reminiscences on technical challenges and stylistic intentions in the Close-ups are generally rich sources of information about Box's working process, the lack of a clear critical frame means that issues of craft and aesthetic choice addressed in these interludes are curiously dislocated from history, without being given any other discursive significance.

Perhaps none of this will matter for *The Art of Film*'s intended readers, given that Christie evidently does not envisage a primary audience among those critically engaged in the study of film. He notes in his introduction that the book's purpose is to 'pass on what [Box] hoped would be the lessons of a lifetime and provide inspiration for the future generations of young filmmakers' (p. 3). Given his self-declared role as purveyor of Box's recollections, Christie's project was clearly hampered by the fact that his subject died while the book was in gestation. Perhaps to compensate for this Christie has personalized the text by referring to Box throughout by his given name. Yet this suggested intimacy brings with it an awkward elision of identity. Christie repeatedly asserts emotional or gustatory responses for Box – 'John was impressed', 'John was worried', and so on – which presumably depend directly on information given in interview. Yet without any scholarly apparatus or other clear indication that Box was the direct source, the effect is confusing and frustrating. At this level Christie's book is less satisfactory than Frayling's extended interview with Adam, where (no matter what editing may have occurred) the reader is given parameters for understanding Adam's reminiscences and the questions or remarks that prompted them.

I noted earlier that *The Art of Film* is by default primarily a celebration of Box – to the degree that even the relatively limited critique in Christie's

2 This odd concatenation of terms is drawn from the massively flawed taxonomy of design 'intensities' offered in Charles and Mirella Affron, *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

3 Tim Bergfelder, Sue Harris and Sarah Street, *Film Architecture and the Transnational Imagination: Set Design in 1930s European Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

book seems out of place. The overall tone of complaisance makes the author's occasional forays into negative criticism especially jarring, bereft as they are of clear critical parameters. For example, he comments sharply that Box's work on *Travels with My Aunt* (George Cukor, 1972) was 'mannered', noting that Box and the director 'seem to have encouraged each other to excess' (p. 107). Yet, at the end of his account of the film, Christie acknowledges that *Travels with my Aunt* was 'a favourite of John's' and that it 'remains a tour de force of art direction, with artifice, embellishment and narrative all intertwined'.² Without further reflection on what it means to be mannered or excessive, or for that matter reflection on the possible reasons for Box's pleasure in the film, Christie's negative observations read as a rote iteration of the still-prevalent critical position that equates effective design with 'moderation' and reticence.

It is a capital error for a reviewer to blame a text for not being some other kind of text, and in spite of my earlier strictures on the monograph as a form I do not want to suggest that I think *The Art of Film* ought to have been a different sort of book. Christie, like Frayling, is to be praised for conserving and making available abundant direct testimony from a respected designer in accessible and elegant form. However, I will end by admitting my hope that for every one such text on a single designer there are two or three more wide-ranging analytical texts, such as the recent, exemplary study of set design within the broader institutional contexts of 1930s European cinema by Tim Bergfelder, Sue Harris and Sarah Street.³

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr040

Charlotte Brunsdon, *Law and Order* (British Film Institute TV Classics). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 134 pp.

Mark Duguid, *Cracker* (British Film Institute TV Classics). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 157 pp.

Deborah Jermyn, *Prime Suspect* (British Film Institute TV Classics). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 134 pp.

SUE TURNBULL

Writing about a television crime drama for a series of British Film Institute monographs, Charlotte Brunsdon, Mark Duguid and Deborah Jermyn each discuss why the particular show upon which they reflect should be considered a TV Classic. For Duguid and Jermyn the task is a tad easier since both *Cracker* (Granada/ITV, 1993-96, 2006) and *Prime Suspect* (Granada/ITV, 1991-96, 2003-06) still have an undeniable resonance in today's television environment. *Prime Suspect: the Final Act* and an episode of *Cracker* entitled 'Nine Eleven' both appeared in 2006, although in neither instance were these final chapters as well received as earlier episodes. Brunsdon, however, has a rather more tricky assignment.

2 This odd concatenation of terms is drawn from the massively flawed taxonomy of design 'intensities' offered in Charles and Mirella Affron, *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

3 Tim Bergfelder, Sue Harris and Sarah Street, *Film Architecture and the Transnational Imagination: Set Design in 1930s European Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

book seems out of place. The overall tone of complaisance makes the author's occasional forays into negative criticism especially jarring, bereft as they are of clear critical parameters. For example, he comments sharply that Box's work on *Travels with My Aunt* (George Cukor, 1972) was 'mannered', noting that Box and the director 'seem to have encouraged each other to excess' (p. 107). Yet, at the end of his account of the film, Christie acknowledges that *Travels with my Aunt* was 'a favourite of John's' and that it 'remains a tour de force of art direction, with artifice, embellishment and narrative all intertwined'.² Without further reflection on what it means to be mannered or excessive, or for that matter reflection on the possible reasons for Box's pleasure in the film, Christie's negative observations read as a rote iteration of the still-prevalent critical position that equates effective design with 'moderation' and reticence.

It is a capital error for a reviewer to blame a text for not being some other kind of text, and in spite of my earlier strictures on the monograph as a form I do not want to suggest that I think *The Art of Film* ought to have been a different sort of book. Christie, like Frayling, is to be praised for conserving and making available abundant direct testimony from a respected designer in accessible and elegant form. However, I will end by admitting my hope that for every one such text on a single designer there are two or three more wide-ranging analytical texts, such as the recent, exemplary study of set design within the broader institutional contexts of 1930s European cinema by Tim Bergfelder, Sue Harris and Sarah Street.³

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr040

Charlotte Brunsdon, *Law and Order* (British Film Institute TV Classics). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 134 pp.

Mark Duguid, *Cracker* (British Film Institute TV Classics). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 157 pp.

Deborah Jermyn, *Prime Suspect* (British Film Institute TV Classics). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 134 pp.

SUE TURNBULL

Writing about a television crime drama for a series of British Film Institute monographs, Charlotte Brunsdon, Mark Duguid and Deborah Jermyn each discuss why the particular show upon which they reflect should be considered a TV Classic. For Duguid and Jermyn the task is a tad easier since both *Cracker* (Granada/ITV, 1993-96, 2006) and *Prime Suspect* (Granada/ITV, 1991-96, 2003-06) still have an undeniable resonance in today's television environment. *Prime Suspect: the Final Act* and an episode of *Cracker* entitled 'Nine Eleven' both appeared in 2006, although in neither instance were these final chapters as well received as earlier episodes. Brunsdon, however, has a rather more tricky assignment.

The four-part series *Law and Order* broadcast by the BBC in 1978 was subsequently 'disappeared', not to be seen until April 2008 when the National Film Theatre in London held a 'packed all-day event' to mark the release of the DVD. Thus while each of the authors makes a convincing case for their respective shows, it is intriguing how the arguments intersect and diverge, pointing to the instability of the designation 'classic'.

Duguid opens the bargaining for *Cracker* by listing those television shows that have already laid claim to the adjective. His list includes the usual suspects of British drama made before the end of the 1980s, such as *Cathy Come Home* (BBC, 1966), *Pennies from Heaven* (BBC, 1978), and the only one to appear thus far in the BFI TV Classic series, the crime thriller *Edge of Darkness* (BBC, 1985). The jury, suggests Duguid, is still out on which shows after 1990 will be considered 'classic', thereby turning a blind eye, perhaps deliberately, to those programmes which have already been accorded classic status in the BFI series thus far. These include *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Warner/UPN, 1997-2003), *CSI Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000-) and *The Office* (BBC2, 2001-03). For Duguid, what the television shows he nominates have in common is 'a convergence of popularity and critical praise, high standards of technical achievement and performance' and 'a powerful sense of their own time'. But most important is the claim that they are all 'marked by a confident authorial voice' (p. 6). Particular attention is therefore paid to the role of television writer Jimmy McGovern as the principal auteur of *Cracker*.

For Deborah Jermyn, the case for *Prime Suspect* depends on the assertion that *Prime Suspect* was always 'water-cooler television', even before the term entered the vernacular (p. 1). The point is well made, as Jermyn suggests that 'water-cooler TV' speaks 'to the manner in which some programmes break out of "the flow" of television's everyday stream of sounds and images to enter our cultural consciousness in exceptional ways' (p. 1). As evidence, Jermyn offers her own experience as a student in the Midlands at the time of the first *Prime Suspect* miniseries in 1991, witnessing the buzz that then surrounded the show. 'Audiences', she suggests, 'were captivated as the resilient, career-driven Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison (Mirren) pursued a serial killer with a penchant for raping and torturing his victims, while fighting too for her own survival in the chauvinistic world of the police' (pp. 1-2). As a consequence *Prime Suspect* was something of a 'national event', as borne out by Philip Purser, writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, who suggested that the show gave rise to a nation 'united, divided, mesmerised, offended and generally caught up in a television whodunit' (p. 2).

Television as national event is also part of the case made by Brunson for the 1978 series *Law and Order*. This 'controversial realist dramatic treatment of the British criminal justice system' (p. 5), caused an enormous 'fuss' at the time with the BBC being denounced in the House of Lords for having dared to make and show it. Intriguingly, Brunson notes, key documents relating to what went on behind closed doors have since gone 'missing'. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the BBC agreed

never to repeat or show *Law and Order* again, probably fearful for the future status of its television licence fee (a historical context carefully illuminated by Brunsdon). The case for *Law and Order*, however, does not rest here. Brunsdon also draws attention to the show's 'ambition, its accomplishment and its influence' (p. 6), an argument which she proceeds to justify with considerable conviction.

Not surprisingly, each of the authors also insists that their particular show was 'ground-breaking' in some way. For Brunsdon, this has as much to do with *Law and Order*'s form and aesthetics as its content. With its intricate structure, each episode belonging to its own generic world of the police story, the heist movie, the courtroom drama and the prison film, *Law and Order* not only borrowed from the past but also anticipated the future. Thus in its 'highly wrought' naturalism, Brunsdon argues, the series owed an aesthetic debt to an 'experimental thread of British TV drama' during the 1960s and early 1970s which it reconfigured within the genre of a police procedural. As such, the 1978 *Law and Order* therefore has more common with the contemporary crime series *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-08) than its namesake, the US version of *Law and Order* (NBC, 1990-2010). Familiar with all these programmes, I am inclined to agree. However, from the perspective of the present, the 1978 *Law and Order* appears extremely stylized and the dialogue remarkably stilted. *The Wire* it ain't; or, more likely, realism ain't what it used to be. The impulse towards 'naturalism' is, however, most definitely there, and Brunsdon's claim for the innovation and 'audacious moves' of the series within the trajectory of the television crime drama is certainly sustainable.

For Jermyn, *Prime Suspect*'s originality lies not only in its feminist politics, dubious though they sometimes were, but also in the ways the series combined 'the shadowy criminal world of film noir' with the 'starkness of the quasi-documentary' (p. 10). With its 'intermittent use of deep-focus photography' and its 'startling camera angles', *Prime Suspect*, looked more like a feature film than a cop show, and therein lies its status as 'quality' television (p. 11). This is a provocative statement, given its suggestion that 'ordinary television', to use Frances Bonner's memorable phrase, is unlikely ever to be considered 'quality'.¹ In other words, 'quality' television is television which looks and sounds like film. Given this conclusion, it is interesting that Jermyn pays little attention to the roles of the various directors over the course of the series – as one surely would if the text in question were a film. Instead the focus is on creator and writer Lynda La Plante (who was only really involved in the first three installments), and Helen Mirren, as the actress who came to 'own' the character of Tennison, becoming a national treasure in the process. This focus supports the contention that in the discussion of television, it is routinely the producers, writers and actors rather than the directors who figure most prominently. Television, as Horace Newcomb and Robert S. Alley initially proposed, may well still be the 'producer's medium'.² Except, as John Caldwell has argued, when the director crosses over, as was the case with David Lynch and Steven Spielberg.³

¹ Frances Bonner, *Ordinary Television* (London: Sage, 2003).

² Horace Newcomb and Robert S. Alley, *The Producer's Medium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

³ John Thornton Caldwell, *Televsuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

This bias towards ‘the producer’s medium’ is also present in Duguid’s account of *Cracker*, in which he acknowledges not only the seminal role of producer Gub Neal, who came up with the original concept, but also that of actor Robbie Coltrane, who so effectively embodied the character of Fitz despite McGovern’s initial objections. Even more interesting is Duguid’s discussion of McGovern’s contribution to the series, in which it is revealed just how personal a project television was for the writer. While *Cracker*’s melodramatic structure of feeling clearly had its roots in McGovern’s earlier career writing for soaps such as *Brookside* (Channel 4, 1982–2003), for McGovern the formulaic structure of the television crime drama provided him with the imperative to say something ‘meaningful about life’ (p. 19). Thus McGovern’s politics, anger and personal demons readily found their way into a series for which he cheerfully admitted he did little research. As a result, *Cracker* was arguably more of a series about masculinity in extremis and the plight of the white working-class male than a commentary on the current state of policing in the UK.

Duguid’s other claims for *Cracker*’s ground-breaking innovation include the show’s attention to forensic science, which in his opinion renders it a ‘transitional’ crime series marking a point of generic change from the ‘traditional’ police procedural to a new focus on medical and scientific investigators (p. 49). I am not so convinced by this argument, since the same could also be said about the earlier episodes of *Prime Suspect* which, as Jermyn notes, were also remarkable for their attention to dead bodies and post mortems (p. 5). Jermyn even spots a nice intertextual nod to *Quincy, M.E.* (NBC 1976–83), an earlier US show entirely devoted to the work of a medical examiner. Forensics, it would seem, has long been a recurring trope within a television genre that has routinely oscillated between the push of documentary and the pull of fiction.

Perhaps what is most interesting about these three studies is that each of them deals with a television series in which the portrait of the police and the criminal justice system that emerges is singularly unflattering. This challenges the repeated claim that television crime drama offers ‘a consolation for the messy inconclusiveness of the process of justice’ in the real world.⁴ On the contrary, as Brunson notes, *Law and Order* deliberately set out ‘to demonstrate how far the workings of the criminal justice system are from most people’s ideas of the justice and law’ (p. 6). The most interesting phrase for me here is ‘most people’s ideas’. After sixty years of television crime drama, much of which has suggested just how flawed, corrupt and misguided the law can be in its administration of justice, are any of us really under any illusions about the grim reality?

As Brunson’s account of the ‘suppression’ of *Law and Order* reveals, the television crime drama has routinely played a key role in the interrogation of law and justice issues, and she quotes producer Tony Garnett on the topic: ‘the very choice of how their stories are told and what stories are told ... tell you a great deal about the attitude of the public

4 Richard Sparks, *Television and the Drama of Crime* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992) p. 24.

towards the police at that particular time' (p. 31). This intriguing comment would seem to imply that every generation gets the crime dramas that they imagine into being. So which comes first, the reality or the fiction?

Whatever the answer, there is no doubt that each of the shows discussed had a significant impact at the time it was broadcast: *Law and Order* was judged too dangerous to be shown, *Prime Suspect* opened up a can of gender worms, and *Cracker* allowed McGovern to give vent to his abiding rage at what he perceived as the Labour Party's progressive abandonment of the white working class (p. 67). That each was also a consummate work of televisual art produced collaboratively by a team of skilled professionals is also apparent in the careful textual analysis of key moments in these series, illuminated by telling screen captures.

For Brunsdon, textual analysis allows her to make the case that *Law and Order*'s complex aesthetic strategies have hitherto been overlooked because of the show's status as a national event. Jermyn is allowed to point to the ways in which *Prime Suspect* reimagined 'cop show realism' (p. 68). For Duguid, it all begins with a scene in which Fitz and Judith discuss the ending of the Warner Bros film *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), a moment which crystallizes *Cracker*'s 'touchstone' themes of 'justice and injustice, Catholicism, moral choices and the impossibility of a "pure motive"' (p. 2). In each instance the author's commentary directed me back to the series to interrogate their claims and to see for myself. And in each instance, whether or not I agreed with what had been written, I saw the series in a way I had not before. That, then, is the accomplishment of these three slim volumes – to send us back to the experience of the text with new insights, new perspectives and new questions. Whether the series are classics or not is hardly the issue. What they offer is compelling television which merits more than a second look.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr044

Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity: an Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010, 408 pp.

KATHLEEN SCOTT

Media theorist Laura U. Marks argues convincingly in her new book, *Enfoldment and Infinity: an Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*, that an infinity of artistic forms arise from a unitary *Kunstwollen*, the 'will of art' elaborated by art historian Alöis Riegl. Marks is able to elaborate connections between such disparate art forms as ancient Islamic calligraphy and computer-generated vectors, Persian carpets and neobaroque films, and the pixillated digitality of modern technology and *fana*, the self-eclipsing ecstasy of Islamic mysticism. Although certainly distinct from one another, these examples bear traces of a common origin that manifests itself to discerning viewers.

towards the police at that particular time' (p. 31). This intriguing comment would seem to imply that every generation gets the crime dramas that they imagine into being. So which comes first, the reality or the fiction?

Whatever the answer, there is no doubt that each of the shows discussed had a significant impact at the time it was broadcast: *Law and Order* was judged too dangerous to be shown, *Prime Suspect* opened up a can of gender worms, and *Cracker* allowed McGovern to give vent to his abiding rage at what he perceived as the Labour Party's progressive abandonment of the white working class (p. 67). That each was also a consummate work of televisual art produced collaboratively by a team of skilled professionals is also apparent in the careful textual analysis of key moments in these series, illuminated by telling screen captures.

For Brunsdon, textual analysis allows her to make the case that *Law and Order*'s complex aesthetic strategies have hitherto been overlooked because of the show's status as a national event. Jermyn is allowed to point to the ways in which *Prime Suspect* reimagined 'cop show realism' (p. 68). For Duguid, it all begins with a scene in which Fitz and Judith discuss the ending of the Warner Bros film *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), a moment which crystallizes *Cracker*'s 'touchstone' themes of 'justice and injustice, Catholicism, moral choices and the impossibility of a "pure motive"' (p. 2). In each instance the author's commentary directed me back to the series to interrogate their claims and to see for myself. And in each instance, whether or not I agreed with what had been written, I saw the series in a way I had not before. That, then, is the accomplishment of these three slim volumes – to send us back to the experience of the text with new insights, new perspectives and new questions. Whether the series are classics or not is hardly the issue. What they offer is compelling television which merits more than a second look.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr044

Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity: an Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010, 408 pp.

KATHLEEN SCOTT

Media theorist Laura U. Marks argues convincingly in her new book, *Enfoldment and Infinity: an Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*, that an infinity of artistic forms arise from a unitary *Kunstwollen*, the 'will of art' elaborated by art historian Alöis Riegl. Marks is able to elaborate connections between such disparate art forms as ancient Islamic calligraphy and computer-generated vectors, Persian carpets and neobaroque films, and the pixillated digitality of modern technology and *fana*, the self-eclipsing ecstasy of Islamic mysticism. Although certainly distinct from one another, these examples bear traces of a common origin that manifests itself to discerning viewers.

- 1 Timothy Murray, *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Angela Ndalanian, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup (eds), *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

- 2 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

This book contributes to a growing field of scholarship on neobaroque elements in both classical Islamic and contemporary computer-generated art and media, which includes recent works by Timothy Murray, Angela Ndalanian, and Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup.¹ Marks enriches this discussion by introducing a valuable juxtaposition between the two artistic traditions that manages to explore their genealogical interaction without ignoring the different sociocultural and historical environments out of which they arose, or suggesting a teleological progression from one to the other.

Enfoldment and Infinity may be of less use to film scholars than Marks's previous books, as here she does not focus exclusively on film. She does provide a detailed discussion of algorithmic and neobaroque aesthetics in film in Chapter 6, but film is by no means the artistic medium in which she is most interested. However, the wide scope of Marks's discussion may in fact be a strength in terms of the relevance of the book to film scholars, who can view it as an opportunity to broaden their theoretical horizons and discover correspondences and influences between filmic and non-filmic art forms. Marks explores concepts in relation to non-filmic art, such as the fold and *Kunstwollen*, that have the potential to contribute significantly to film studies by situating movements, stylistic traditions and individual films within their larger artistic and cultural contexts. Her approach is promising in its ability to address theory and history in equal measure, proving that this combination leads to a more comprehensive understanding of any number of art forms – including film.

Marks employs Gilles Deleuze's concept of the fold, articulated in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*,² to describe the distance in time period and geographic space between classical Islamic art and contemporary western new media art, suggesting it is a difference in aesthetic degree rather than a case of separate forms evolving in complete isolation from one another. She offers their similarities as evidence of the ways in which two seemingly disparate artistic practices and philosophies enfold and are enfolded within each other:

new media art, considered Western, has an important genealogy in the aesthetics, philosophy, and science of classical Islam. The historical properties of Islamic art ... reemerge in new media art independent of the new media artist's intentions. They express a sort of Islamic *Kunstwollen* immanent to computer-based media. (p. 149)

In keeping with her focus on religion as a locus of artistic practice and philosophy, Marks offers her own trinity of image–information–infinite to describe the processes of enfoldment both within and between classical Islamic art and contemporary digital media. Images represent the information that they enfold, which then mediates viewers' relationship to the infinite. This tripartite relationship to users' immersion in the realms and relationships created by online networks, as well as to worshippers' self-effacing contemplation of the divine. Programming codes underlie

computer images, art and networks and seem to have infinite depth in their ability to connect with each other and create new sources of information, just as the Qur'an mediates between the art through which its words are conveyed to the public and the infinite God whose authority it represents.

Marks succeeds in rendering complicated Deleuzian concepts such as the fold as clear and accessible theoretical supports for her observations of similarities in classical Islamic and western new media art. Her thorough contextualizations of complicated Deleuzian terminology make her arguments accessible to Deleuzians and non-Deleuzians alike. To use an idiom of the religious environment with which Marks is concerned, she avoids preaching to those who are already Deleuzian converts (which is always a distinct possibility when approaching art through the lens of Deleuzian theory) and opens up classical Islamic art as a new aesthetic territory to which Deleuzian theory can be productively and comprehensibly applied.

In addition to her use of Deleuzian theory to explicate the enfolded/unfolded relationship between images, information and the infinite, Marks also draws on Riegl's concept of *Kunstswollen* to locate a 'will of art' that traverses time and space, and thus connects the motivations behind classical Islamic and new media art. Marks's use of Riegl is more evident in *Enfoldment and Infinity* than in her previous books, which are concerned mainly with cinematic art. In *The Skin of the Film* and *Touch*,³ Marks's most extensive use of Riegl is her employment of his definition of 'haptic visibility' as a tactile mode of perception strictly separated from optical vision. *Enfoldment and Infinity* instead sees her connecting more directly with the specific objects of Riegl's interest – tactile arts such as carpets and tapestries – in order to illustrate the influence of their haptic materiality on European painting. As with her adoption of Deleuze's concept of the fold, Marks's use of Riegl enhances her argument of the commonalities between artistic practices without overwhelming readers with obscure terminology.

Marks also expands her discussion of the fold and *Kunstswollen* beyond the theories of Deleuze and Riegl by situating artistic strategies of enfoldment within the contemporary political sphere. Marks argues that enfolded meaning can remain hidden from censors, only to be unfolded and appreciated by those who purposefully seek it out: a secret dialogue in plain sight between the art and the viewer. She touches briefly on the potential for contemporary Islamic art to employ enfoldment as a tool of political subversion, a fascinating observation upon which she does not fully elaborate. Exploring the political potential of enfoldment would entail a fruitful discussion of the role that art can play in fostering and encouraging wider sociopolitical protests and revolutions.

The politics of enfoldment also extends to the West and its particular form of censorship: the disempowerment that occurs when information and the infinite becomes inaccessible to all but a chosen technological elite. Marks discusses the dangers of a submissive and unquestioning reliance on code that its users do not understand themselves, a fascinating

3 Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), and *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multi-sensory Media* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

topic that, although not a major concern of *Enfoldment and Infinity*, could be elaborated on elsewhere. Anyone who engages with computer technology or media art can relate to Marks's warning against the incapacitating impact of 'user-friendly' technology on consumers whose lives it supposedly enhances – you do not have to understand or change the codes yourself because a privileged group of experts can do this for you. Marks locates one antecedent to this trend of technological quietism in the information age in the *bila' kayfa* (without asking how) of certain classical Islamic philosophies (p. 206). On a more positive note, in Chapter 7 Marks also details the challenges that a number of contemporary Islamic and western media artists have posed to disabling technology by making manifest the code beneath their images, which is no longer able to shroud itself in a quasi-mystical light that renders its workings unfathomable. This observation is especially germane in relation to the current advent of digital cinema, which has the potential to creatively reinvent cinematic practices while also disempowering spectators with the very technological complexity (and incomprehensibility, to most) that makes this spectacle possible.

Although Marks's purpose in *Enfoldment and Infinity* is to connect classical Islamic art with that of the contemporary West rather than embark upon an in-depth exploration of the politics of enfoldment, she opens up a fascinating inquiry into a *Kunstwollenesque* will of subversive political expression through art that exists in a variety of forms across a wide array of contexts. Marks issues a commendable call to make the codes through which we gain access to images and the infinite accessible to users, and leaves us with the desire to explore further the infinite possibilities of enfolded aesthetics.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjr041

Contributors

Eylem Atakav is Lecturer in Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia. She is author of *Women and Turkish Cinema* (2012) and editor of *Directory of World Cinema: Turkey*. She is currently coediting *Women and Contemporary World Cinema* and *From Smut to Soft Core: 1970s and World Cinema*.

Susan Berridge recently completed a PhD in the Department of Film and Television at the University of Glasgow. She has since been Lecturer in Media Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research interests include the teen genre and feminist work on sexual violence.

Andy Birtwistle is Principal Lecturer in Film Radio and Television Studies at Canterbury Christ Church University, and author of *Cinesonica: Sounding Film and Video* (2010). He is also a practising filmmaker and sound artist.

Piers Britton is Director of the Visual and Media Studies programme at the University of Redlands. He has written extensively on design for science fiction and fantasy television, and is currently working on a wide-ranging study of costume and art direction in both television and cinema.

Alison Butler is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies in the Department of Film, Theatre and Television at the University of Reading. She is author of *Women's Cinema: the Contested Screen* (2002). Her current research is on time, space and site in artists' film and moving image installations.

Jeremy G. Butler has taught television and film studies since 1980 at the University of Alabama and the University of Arizona. He is author of *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (2012), first published in 1994. He is also author of *Television Style* (2010).

Lee Carruthers is Assistant Professor of Film Studies at the University of Calgary. Her book project, *Doing Time: Engaging Timeliness in Contemporary Cinema*, analyzes the rich experiences of temporality generated by contemporary film.

Jason Jacobs is Reader in Cultural History in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. He is working on an Australian Research Council-funded project called 'Worldwide: the history of the BBC's commercial arm'. He is also writing books on the television Western *Deadwood* and on David Milch.

Alice Lovejoy is Assistant Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Minnesota, and a former editor at *Film Comment*. Her first book will examine the emergence of an experimental film culture in Czechoslovakia's Army Film studio.

Laikwan Pang is Professor in the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her latest book is titled *Creativity and its Discontents: China's Creative Industries and Intellectual Property Right Offense* (forthcoming, 2012).

Helen Piper is Lecturer in Television Studies in the Department of Drama at the University of Bristol, and was formerly a senior manager for BBC Television Entertainment. She is currently writing a study of the television detective. She was joint recipient of the *Screen* Award in 2004–05.

Susan Potter is a PhD candidate in the Department of Film, Television and Media Studies at the University of Auckland. Her thesis rereads a selection of key films and figures from the silent film era in order to trace the ways in which early cinema represents and reconfigures female same-sex desire and modern lesbian identity.

Jennifer Pranolo is a PhD candidate in the Department of Film and Media at the University of California, Berkeley. She was guest curator of the film series 'Paul Sharits: an open cinema' at the Berkeley Pacific Film Archive. Her research focuses on changing ideas of the photographic index in new media and contemporary art.

Kathleen Scott is a PhD candidate in the Department of Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. Her thesis is on the political and ethical importance of haptic imagery in a variety of film genres. Her research interests include phenomenological film theory, feminism, film ethics and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze.

Lauren Jade Thompson is a PhD candidate and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Department of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Her thesis explores how masculinity is constructed in popular media in the postfeminist era.

Sue Turnbull is Professor of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Wollongong in Australia. She has published broadly on media education, audience studies and television. She is coeditor of *Investigating Veronica Mars: Essays on the Teen Detective Series* (2011).

Maria A. Velez-Serna is a PhD candidate in the School of Culture and Creative Arts at the University of Glasgow, funded by an ORSAS scholarship. She has published work in *Post-Script* and *Participations*. Her current research looks at pre-1920 film distribution in Scotland.

Notes to Contributors

In 2009 *Screen* made the decision to switch to the **ScholarOne Manuscripts** online submission system. Many readers will already be familiar with this method, but for those who are not, it will in essence mean that manuscripts are submitted through the ScholarOne Manuscripts site, and thereafter all communications between editorial office, author and peer reviewers will be channelled through, and logged by, the system. Our intention, in moving to this new system, is to improve efficiency and clarity in all aspects of the process: providing, and encouraging from others, a swifter response; creating an easily accessible history of a manuscript's progress; reducing the need for photocopying and printing.

Authors are guided through the submission procedure with onscreen prompts and instructions; however, if you experience any difficulties or have any comments to make about using Scholar One Manuscripts, please contact our editorial office. Like any new system it may benefit from some finetuning, and if there is anything we can do to improve the transition we would like to know.

For full details of online submission, visit (http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/screen/for_authors/screen_submission_online.html)

Manuscripts should not exceed 10,000 words, excluding footnotes. Submission of a manuscript is taken by the Editors to imply that the paper represents original work not previously published, and not under consideration for publication, elsewhere; and if accepted for publication that it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in any language, without the consent of the Publisher. The Author should be prepared to obtain, if accepted, the necessary permissions to include copyright material such as illustrations.

Authors whose work is published in *Screen* will receive one free copy of the journal issue and, if requested, 25 offprints of their contribution. Future republication in an anthology or collection of the Author's own work is freely permissible, provided due credit is given to the original publication in *Screen*. Republication requests from a third party require the permission of Author and Publisher. For information on permissions, visit

(http://www.oxfordjournals.org/access_purchase/rights_permissions.html)

Notes and references, which should be kept to a minimum, should be on an automatic numbering system. Style for citations of *written sources* is as follows:

1. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (London: Macmillan, 1982).
2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'Melodramatic realism: on some French women's films in the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.
3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietrapaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

References to *films* in both notes and main text should include full title, and in the case of non-English language films original release title should precede US and/or British release title, followed by director and release date in round brackets: *A bout de souffle/Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

Where such information is relevant to the argument, details of production company and/or country of origin may also be included:

The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, Warner Bros, US, 1945)

References to *television programmes* should be dated from the year of first transmission, and, in the case of long-running serials, the duration of the run should be indicated. Details of production company, transmitting channel, country, etc should be supplied where relevant: *Coronation Street* (Granada, 1961–)

Where writers or producers are credited their role should be indicated:

Where the Difference Begins (w. David Mercer, BBC, 1961)

For further details on our footnote and reference style, visit (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/screen/submitpapers/>)

COMING SOON

Volume 53, number 1

JONNA EAGLE: A rough ride: strenuous spectatorship and the early cinema of assaults

FIONA HANDYSIDE: The possibilities of a beach: queerness and François Ozon's beaches

GEORGE KOUVAROS: 'Time and how to note it down': the lessons of *Pull My Daisy*

TIJANA MAMULA: Metaphorically seeing: the place names of Marguerite Duras

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

Volume 52, number 3

NIELS NIESSEN: Lives of cinema: against its 'death'

PAUL COOKE: The long shadow of the New German Cinema: *Deutschland 09*, *Deutschland im Herbst* and national film culture

THOMAS AUSTIN: *Standard Operating Procedure*, 'the mystery of photography' and the politics of pity

CÜNEYT ÇAKIRLAR: Queer art of parallaxed document: the visual discourse of docudrag in *Never My Soul!*

MIKA KO: 'Neodocumentarism' in *Funeral Parade of Roses*: the new realism of Matsumoto Toshio

Volume 52, number 2

JONATHAN FOLTZ: Betraying oneself: *Silent Light* and the world of emotion

PANSY DUNCAN: Tears, melodrama and 'heterosensibility' in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*

ANAND PANDIAN: Reel time: ethnography and the historical ontology of the cinematic image

ALASTAIR PHILLIPS: Fractured landscapes: detection, location and history in Uchida Tomu's *A Fugitive From the Past*

HELEN WHEATLEY: Beautiful images in spectacular clarity: spectacular television, landscape programming and the question of (tele)visual pleasure

THE FILM FESTIVALS DOSSIER

ISSN 0036-9543 (PRINT)
ISSN 1460-2474 (ONLINE)

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.screen.oxfordjournals.org

Screen